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Who hast any thing, which is not thine? Thou payest, and owest not; thou remittest thy dues, but without prejudice to the rights of thy divine justice. Thou art in every place, and in each entire; thou canst be perceived, but not with human eyes; absent from none, yet far from the hearts of the wicked; but still not absent even from them; for where thou art not by thy grace, thou art present by thy justice. Though present in every place, we can scarce find thee in any; we follow thee, and yet thou removest not: and what we pursue we are not able to attain: for thou possessest, fillest, comprehendest all, transcendest and sustainest all things, by thy mighty power.

Thou teachest the hearts of the faithful without the help or noise of words; thou art not extended with space, nor varied by time, nor nearer, or more distant by motion; but "inhabitest light inaccessible, which no man in this life, hath seen, nor can see." Always at rest in thyself, and yet pervading the whole universe, and every part of it. As thy nature is really one, and uncompounded, it is indivisible: thou sustainest and fillest, illustratest, and possessest all things, and art every where all in all."

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Mrs. Herbert.—I am glad to see you again, my good Margaret. Little Peggy gives great satisfaction to her master and mistress; and is extremely desirous of being acquainted with her duty towards God, and towards them. She begged that I would present her duty to you, and her love to her brothers and sisters.

Margaret.—Indeed, madam, she took a great liberty; but God bless her little soul! Peggy had always a good heart. As for what concerns her duty, to be sure she wanted to be instructed in that. We poor folks in the country, madam, have not much time to talk to our children about it; and besides, few of us know how to read in books, like those that live in towns. As for my part, I never had any schooling at all; and besides, God help me! I have quite enough to do, to put bread into my children's mouths, without giving them learning. However, I always tell them to be honest, and to wrong nobody. Upon that score, neither I, nor their father, (God rest his soul!) had ever any thing to reproach ourselves.

Mrs. Herbert.—You are to be commended for recommending honesty to your children. To serve God sincerely, and to do to others as we would be done by, is the way to heaven, Margaret.

Margaret.—As for serving God, madam—'tis you rich folks that can do that best. For us, who are obliged to work from morning till night—we have hardly time to say an "Our Father" twice a day, and to get to church on the Sunday.

Mrs. Herbert.—You are quite mistaken, Margaret, in fancying that the rich can serve God more easily than the poor. I shall spend the summer in this place; and if you have a mind to come to my house for half an hour on Sundays, after prayers, and to bring any of your friends with you,—we will talk together concerning the means of serving God; and I trust you will be convinced, that you poor people may go to heaven as easily as ourselves. Good evening, Margaret. I shall expect you next Sunday.

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JAMES YORKE BRAMSTON, D. D.

BISHOP OF USULA, AND VICAR APOSTOLIC OF THE LONDON DISTRICT.

My Lord,

I have taken the liberty to dedicate the few following pages to your Lordship. They present, not a regular treatise upon the subject, which I have undertaken to discuss, but merely an imperfect etching. They present, however, an etching, which, if viewed attentively, will be found to exhibit a variety striking attitudes, and important truths,—truths which, I conceive, are sufficiently awful to awaken the solicitude of the thoughtful, and more prudent, enemies of our religion, and to engage them to weigh well those principles upon which,—*when consistent*,—they build the fabric of their belief, and the presumed security of their salvation. For the force, and excellence, of many of the observations, as well as for many portions of the work, I am indebted to the eloquent Essays of the celebrated Abbé De La Mennais.

The object of the work is to point out, as its title expresses, some of those innumerable difficulties, which surround, and perplex, the religion of Protes-

tantism. To your Lordship a work of this description is addressed with peculiar propriety; because it was those very difficulties, which, first striking your good sense, whilst yet you were a Protestant, induced your prudence to view them with distrust; and ere long, to examine them with care. You did this,—comparing them, at the same time, with the grounds, and character, of the parent institute. I need not state what was the result. It was such only as might be expected from a mind like yours, —frank, open, and sincere,—wishing to see the truth, and willing to admit it. Convinced soon of the illusive pretensions of Protestantism, you quitted the Established, and embraced the Catholic, church, —sacrificing, by the generous act, those flattering prospects of worldly honours, to which, both from your talents, your rank, and reputation (for, you were already a distinguished ornament in our temples of jurisprudence), you were eminently entitled to aspire. Hence, therefore, the propriety of dedicating these pages to your Lordship.

It is not, however, upon this score alone, that I am induced to do so. I do so, moreover, by way of testifying my affection for your person, my gratitude for your favours, my veneration for your character, and my esteem for your many amiable virtues.

Your Lordship's
Obedient and faithful servant.
JOHN FLETCHER.

Northampton,
Feb. 2nd, 1829.

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THE DIFFICULTIES

OF

PROTESTANTISM.*

"All the religions, and all the sects, in the world, are built upon the dispute betwixt these two,—whether men are to govern themselves by their own private judgment, in their faith, and religion; or to be determined by the authority of others." —*Bishop Leslie, on Private Judgment.*

I. WHOEVER, with serious attention, contemplates the scenes, which in this country, present themselves, every where, to his observation, cannot but be forcibly struck with the singularity of the

* From the title, which I have thus prefixed to the following pages, the reader may, perhaps, be induced to suppose, that they have some reference to the late work of Mr. Stanley Faber, which he has called "*The Difficulties of Romanism.*" However, such is not the case. The present work is neither designed as a reply to that illiberal,—and therefore, popular,—publication; nor does my plan at all resemble that of the learned Vicar of Stockton. He, in order to evince, as he pretends, the errors of "*Romanism,*" has, with infinite industry, raked up and artfully linked together, every argument almost, and every objection, that either the learning, and distorted ingenuity, of his own talented, but strangely constructed mind could suggest; or that the learning, and rancour, of three centuries of hostility, have unceasingly urged against our religion; whilst I, in order to point out the errors of Protestantism, have select-

spectacle. It is a spectacle, which is, almost alike, interesting to the curiosity of the philosopher, as it is important to the feelings of the Christian. He beholds a nation, which is distinguished for its supposed illumination, and good sense, divided, and torn in pieces, by the countless multitude of its sects. He sees an immense host of motley preachers, inculcating ardently almost every possible form of doctrine;—the higher orders of society, the thoughtless victims of indifference, and incredulity;—the vulgar, the dupes of ignorance, and contemptible fanaticism; whilst the little portion, which, alone, cultivates the truth with pious care, is almost imperceptible. In short, he sees, every where around him, a scene of error, and confusion; of infidelity, and neglect. There is not a truth, but what is denied; not a mystery, but what is contradicted; not a principle, but what is contested; not a duty, but what is violated, and called in question.*

ed, for this purpose, only one single consideration,—the tendency, and effects, of the leading principle of the Reformation. From this point alone, I have undertaken to demonstrate, how groundless are the pretensions of the Protestant churches to be respected, as the divine institutions of the eternal wisdom. Let the candid reader judge, and decide.

* "The season of anarchy, and instability, appears to be gaining ground upon us with rapid strides: whilst men, despising all ecclesiastical subordination, and discipline; all 'unity of mind, and judgment;' and esteeming themselves wiser than their teachers, adhere to such practices and opinions, as are right in their own eyes, or rather, such as are agreeable to their own inclination, and conceit."—*Bishop Mant, Bampton Lect.*

Neither are these evils confined solely to religion. They extend to the civil order of things. Men now dispute about every thing,—about governments, laws, customs, and institutions of every kind. A spirit of revolution is actively working in the public mind; and scattering, every where around, the seeds of licentiousness, and mischief. A cloud,—a dark, gloomy cloud,—which is daily thickening, hangs over the country;—and indeed, over half the states of Europe. There exist, in nearly all of them, associations, whose chief aim is the subversion of the Christian church, and the destruction of the present order of civil governments; associations, which are less formidable for their insolence, than they are for their secrecy; and which are more terrific for their mysterious darkness, than if they were daringly arrayed in the field of battle.* I say nothing concern-

"There is quite enough of infidelity amongst us, already. Liberal principles, that is, no fixed principles whatsoever, are professed in every quarter. And in spite of the apparent tranquillity, which reigns around, the day may not be distant, in which there will be as little belief amongst the gentlemen of England, as there is now amongst the philosophers of Germany, —that is, NONE AT ALL."—*British Critic.*

* "At the present moment, the earth does not rock under our feet, nor do the fires blaze around us. But, the furious element is still active, though it works unseen. The very ground, on which we tread, is mined. The materials are all combined and prepared; and the next hour may witness the explosion."—*British Critic.* Such as these are the sentiments, and such also the frequent concessions, of many learned and thoughtful members of the Established Church.

ing the state of public morals. For these, it is unhappily too manifest, are awfully corrupted, and profane.

To account for these calamities, is a subject, which, to the philosophic mind, requires little or no investigation. It is easy to account for them, at once, by the leading principle alone of the reformation. For, if men are taught to acknowledge no other arbiter of their belief, but their own private judgment;—if it be the imprescriptible right,—as by the rule of Protestantism it is,—of every individual to judge and decide, as his own reason bids him,—considering these circumstances, and the infinite varieties of the human character,—there are no opinions, however false; no errors, however pernicious, but what are the obvious consequences of so wide, and so singular a privilege. Under its sanction, every thing becomes personal, and individual. Every thing becomes right, which the judgment of each reasoner deems right. Thus, faith, opinion, feelings, assume as many different forms as there are differences of feature in the human mind,—that is, as there are differences of prejudices, passions, interests, talents, and dispositions. It is hence, therefore, that reason in labor has produced, and is daily producing, so many monsters;—so many errors in religion; so much confusion in governments; such corruption in society: hence, that sects, and irreligion, and incredulity, go on, advancing with rapid strides;—that the bands of social order become, every where more feeble; that the tide of iniquity overflows the nation; and that the spirit of

Christian piety is almost extinct amongst us. "*At least nine-tenths of the people,*" says Dr. Daubeny, "*are indifferent about the truth; and of the remaining tenth, the much greater part are unqualified to examine.*" [See Illustration, A.]

Where such is, confessedly, the state of things, it ought, of course, to every thoughtful mind, to appear a matter of serious moment to pause over the awful circumstance; and to weigh well the causes, which have given birth to so great an evil. In reality, there is no possible subject, which can deserve better the attention, both of the Christian, and of the philosopher.*

* "Of the importance of religious controversy," says the eloquent, and animated Earl of Shrewsbury,—"I need say nothing. All, who believe in Revelation; all, who value the morality of the Gospel; all, who ground the hope of their salvation upon the doctrine of our Redeemer, must acknowledge the necessity of a firm, a lively, and a "*steadfast*" faith. This being the case; and since it is the misfortune of Christendom to be harassed, and divided, by such a variety of religious creeds, out of which we are bound to adopt *one*, as the only true one, the utility, and necessity, of polemic controversy appears to be incontestably established. So long as there are '*false prophets, and lying teachers, among the people;*'—so long as *we should always be ready to give an answer to every man, that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us, with meekness;*—so long as it is necessary '*to distinguish the spirit of truth from the spirit of error*'—so long, also, will religious controversy be necessary to furnish us with a knowledge of the points in dispute, and for the defence, and the confirmation, of our faith."

Wise however as are these observations; and manifest as is the obligation of research, whenever the mind is, either involved in error, or under the impressions of well-founded

It is upon its wise solution, that depend the order of our duties; the proper regulation of our lives; the foundation of our hopes, and the prospects of

doubt; yet, is it a fact, that the whole series of religious controversy upon the subject of the catholic religion, as it is conducted by our Protestant polemics, is alike inconsistent, as it is unjust,—calculated not to instruct, and piously direct, the inquirer; but to mislead him, and increase his prejudices. At all events, I can with great truth say this,—that having myself, read the works of a countless multitude of our antagonists,—having studied attentively their pretended expositions, and alleged refutations, of our tenets,—I do not, amidst the whole herd, know even so much *as one*, who is,—I do not say, liberal,—but merely candid,—or at least, if candid,—correct. "The controversy," adds the same learned writer, whom I have just cited, "the controversy of the ministers of the Church of England, instead of displaying the meek spirit of Christianity, is full of rancour and malignity. Instead of calm, and sober search after truth, it is a violent exposition of atrocious calumnies, and falsehoods, heaped upon us through three centuries of persecution. It is, in fine, no controversy at all." Such, certainly, as this is the general, if not the universal character of our Protestant antagonists upon the subject of the Catholic religion. For which reason, I will here, *in limine*, give the following useful piece of advice to the Protestant reader.—Let him always, whenever he takes up a Protestant book, which treats on what he calls "Popery,"—let him always mistrust it;—let him say to himself,—"This book is replete with falsehoods: its leading quality is misrepresentation,—the effect, either of the want of candor, and of prejudice, which hates catholicity; or of ignorance, which does not know it."—Such is the caution, which I suggest to every prudent Protestant reader. Its observance will be of the most important service, both to himself and to us. It will secure him against deception,—against the misfortune, and the disgrace "of being led," as Thorndyke expresses it, "by the nose;" and it will shield us against in-

future happiness. These are the objects, which ought to awaken the solicitude, and animate all the industry, of Christian piety. The time, each thoughtful mind must feel it,—the time is not far distant, when we must all appear before the divine tribunal, there to render an account "*of that faith which is in us.*" And what then will be the confusion of those imprudent individuals, who, interrogated respecting the momentous obligation, will be reduced to the necessity of replying, that "they had never studied the important subject,—never given it, perhaps, so much as one serious thought." Far, then,—very far,—from every Christian mind this culpable neglect. Let each one study, what he ought to believe, in order that he may thus know, what he ought to practise. Let him build his faith, —and therefore also his hopes, upon a strong, and secure foundation. This is, indeed, the real science of immortal beings,—compared with which, all other sciences are but the objects of idle curiosity, or the amusements of luxurious indolence. [See Illustration, B.]

sult, and injustice. "Indeed," observes the eloquent writers of the Monthly Review in the very last number (for November), "indeed the wonder would be if a Fellow of Oxford could make even the slightest allusion to the Catholic religion, without caricaturing, and misrepresenting it, in the most ludicrous manner." To do this, is in fact, a trade,—a passport for many a miserable production,—or, as Voltaire calls it, "La fable convenue," amongst our Protestant writers, whenever there is question of describing "Popery."

II. That there exists such an institution as Religion,—this is a fact, which it would be needless to undertake to prove. The existence of this divine order of things is, amongst all the variety of undeniable truths, the most palpable, and manifest. It is, alike, the instinct of nature; the dictate of reason; and the strongest impulse of the human heart. It is the necessary effect, and expression, of those various relations, which arise from the attributes of God, and from the character and state of man. It is the link, which unites the creature to his Creator.

And as it is manifest, that there exists such an institution as religion, so also it is just equally evident, that the sacred object is necessarily but *One.* It is *One,* because the Divinity is *One;*—insomuch that, as no being can be God, which is not *One,* so neither can any religion be the true religion, if it be not, like the Godhead, characterised by its *unity.* Whence, also, as the unity of God distinguishes him from all false divinities, so in like manner does the unity of religion distinguish it from all false religions. Religion is *One,* because all truth is *One.* Whence again, even in the eye of reason itself, no religion can be deemed divine, which does not possess this important characteristic. Accordingly, it is by this feature, that the true religion,—or the true church of Jesus Christ,—has always been, and will for ever be, distinguished: "ONE *God;* ONE FAITH; ONE *Baptism.*" It is unity, that forms the proof, and the heavenly stamp, of the true religion.

"*Indeed,*" says St. Austin, "*unity is the form of every thing that is beautiful; and, of course, it is, in particular, the form of truth; for truth is beauty by excellence.*"*

III. The true religion is *One.* Therefore, the immediate inference, as I have just stated, is,—that *save this One,*—all other religions are false; and being such, are, of course, displeasing to the God of truth, and injurious to man's salvation. Being false, they are the institutions of human pride; or the creatures of human weakness. Being false, they are, of course, opposed both to the attributes of God, and to the nature, and state, of man. They are, above all, repugnant to the divine veracity. And exactly as crime separates man from the source of purity, so also does the profession of falsehood separate him from the source of truth. Hence, therefore, it is, that we may remark those strong expressions of reprobation, with which our great Legislator condemns the sin of error. Hence, those awful anathemas, which he pronounces upon

* "The religious principle, which emanates from God, must be uniform, and unchangeable." *Dr. Gray, Bampton Lect.*

"Unity is the very essence of Christianity."—*Mr. Wix, Reflections.*

"The faith, of which Christ is the Author, and Finisher, is *One.* And no two descriptions of Christians, who hold opinions, on any article of faith, diametrically opposite to each other, can, both, be orthodox."—*British Critic.*

"Christ founded only *One* Church; and there can be but *One* communion in it."—*Dr. Daubeny.*

all those, who resist, or reject, the authority of his church:—"*He, that will not hear the church, let him be as the heathen, or the publican.*"

Wherefore, I will again remark, that, since all religions, save *One*, are false; and as such, unavailing to future happiness;—since there is but *One* Church, established by the wisdom of God for the worship, and salvation, of his creatures,—and which, also, he commands them, under the pain of reprobation, to reverence, and obey;—so, consequently, it should manifestly seem to follow, that, whosoever values his own soul, and reveres the mandate of his Redeemer, ought, of course,—if he be not already a member of the divine institution; or if he have not the *wise* conviction, that he enjoys this blessing,—to labour, with all his industry, to find it out. Here, his obligation is evident. Here, ignorance,—at least all wilful ignorance,—is fatal.*

* Consulting only the suggestions of common sense, Bayle writes as follows: "On rendra compte, un jour, de tout ce qu'on aura fait, en conséquence des erreurs, qu'on aura prises pour les dogmes véritables. Et malheur, dans cette terrible journée, à ceux, qui se seront aveuglés volontairement!"

Similar to this is the opinion of Rousseau. "Parmi," he says, "tant de religions, qui se proscrivent, et s'excluent, mutuellement, UNE *seule est la bonne.*"

"As the church is but *One;* and the promises of God are made only to that church, so man's covenanted title to those promises must depend upon his being a member of it. Hence, it becomes a matter of importance with every man to be satisfied, that he is really a member of it. For, should he not be such, the sincerity of his profession will not supply the defici-

IV. The same evidences, which evince the unity, and necessity, of the true religion, evince likewise, and just equally, this other important fact,—that there must, consequently, exist some medium or other, by which the public may find it out,—some clear criterion, by which, amidst the multitude of institutions, which crowd society, men may, with real certitude, ascertain, where stands the immortal sanctuary. Indeed, no notion could possibly be, I will not say, more unjust, but even more preposterous, than to suppose, that the wisdom of God has established a religion, and commanded men, under pain of reprobation, to profess it, and that yet, he has not given them the means to trace it out. The great glory of a Being, who is infinitely good, is to manifest his goodness. Whence, to imagine, that he has imposed laws, and obligations, whose infraction is everlasting death,—and yet covered them with a dark, and almost impenetrable veil,—

ency of those privileges, and blessings."—*Dr. Daubeny, Guide to the Church.*

Thus, then, how manifestly wrong, and pernicious, is that prevailing, and fashionable opinion, that it is proper for men to follow the religion,—be this what it may,—which they may chance to have been born in! In this case, the consequence would be, that it is, then, the duty of the far greater part of mankind to honour the divinity with a worship, which is at once false, preposterous, and profane,—that is to honour him with a worship, which He must reprobate, and abhor.

"Inattention about the discovery of the truth is as real a moral depravity, as is the neglect of religious practice."—*Dr. Butler, Analogy.*

this would be insulting,—or rather, it would be blaspheming,—this darling attribute. In short,—to conceive, that he has placed millions of his creatures between truth and falsehood,—commanding them at the same time, with all the severity of his justice, to profess, and obey the truth,—to conceive this, and still suppose, that he has left them without the means of discerning it,—this is an idea, or proposition, which is far worse than folly. Therefore, is the consequence manifest, that there do exist certain mediums, by which the sacred object may be discovered; and not only this, but mediums clear, and accessible to every one,—mediums, analogous and proportioned, to the minds, and capacities of all,—of the simple, as well as of the enlightened; of the ignorant, as well as of the learned. The reason too of all this is plain: It is, because the true religion is designed to be the rule, and conductor, of the former, just equally as it is the guide, and director, of the latter. Whence, again, Rousseau, whom I have just cited in the preceding note, observes.—following only the suggestions of his reason: "S'il étoit une religion sur la terre, hors de laquelle il n'y eut que peine éternelle, et qu'en quelque lieu du monde un seul mortel de bonne foi n'eut pas été frappé de son évidence, le Dieu de cette religion seroit le plus inique, et le plus cruel, de tyrans."

V. Accordingly, this again, like the other propositions, which I have thus far stated, is generally

admitted: and in conformity with such admission, there have been suggested, and adopted, a variety of ingenious measures, by which men have undertaken to seek the truth; and pretended that they had discovered the real seat of the Christian sanctuary. I will just cite, and rapidly discuss, those, which were adopted by the early Protestants; and which, also, are still followed, and made use of, by the different sects of the present day. The following are the principal ones,—to which, also, every other may immediately be referred:—First, *the dictates of reason, and private judgment*; Secondly, *the suggestions of sentiment, or feeling*; Thirdly, *the voice and insinuations of inspiration.* These, assisted, at the same time, by the guidance of the sacred Scriptures, are the mediums, by which, it is contended by the Protestants, the truths of religion, and the seat of the true church, should be investigated; and by which, they still farther maintain, the happy discovery may be made, not ouly with certitude, but even with very little difficulty. Wherefore, having thus stated the alleged expedients, I will proceed to examine, how far they are adapted to their important, and pretended purposes.

VI. When Luther, and his fellow reformers, detached themselves from the communion of the parent church, they were, of course, compelled, as the only justification of their rebellion, to deny the lawfulness of her authority. "The principles, they went upon," says Archdeacon Blackburn, "were such as these: Jesus Christ by his gospel has called all men

unto liberty—the glorious liberty of the sons of God; and restored them to the privilege of working out their salvation by their own understandings." Accordingly, consonant to this "glorious" privilege, the language, which they addressed to their followers, was this: "The authority, which the Church of Rome has usurped over the minds of the faithful, is a violation of the laws of Christian liberty. Its pastors are just equally fallible, as you are. Therefore, it is your right, and your duty too, to judge for yourselves. It is, indeed, for this, that your reason has been given to you. Therefore, read, examine, and decide, as your own judgments prompt you."—Such was the language of the first reformers—as it is still also the language of every consistent Protestant. For, it is only thus,—only by the adoption of the above "glorious liberty,"—that it is possible, with any thing like consistency, to pretend to vindicate the Protestant revolution.*

* "The principle of the Reformation was not so much the right of separation from the errors of a corrupt church, as that Christian liberty, which gives every man a right to worship God according to his conscience."—*Bishop Warburton.*

"The Protestant church permits every iudividual, *et sentire quæ velit; et quæ sentiat, loqui.*"—Bishop Watson.

"The great, and important principle of the sufficient, and exclusive authority of the Scriptures, to be respected, as the unerring guide in all matters of faith, and religious instruction, was the leading star, which conducted our reformers to the discovery, and acknowledgment, of truth."—*Dr. Gray, Bampton Lect.*

It is, therefore, by the dictates of their *reason*, it is thus contended, that men are to judge of the doctrines, or divinity, of religion. It is true, indeed, that such opinion, to those who have not considered attentively the character of the human mind, may appear specious, if not satisfactory. For, *reason*, there is no doubt, is the noblest attribute of human nature,— that grand, and sublime faculty, which approximates us, in some degree, to the Divinity itself, —rendering us, more or less, the sharers, as it were, of his Being; the partakers of his wisdom; the participators in his truth. It is by it, that we are exalted, not only above those millions of worlds, which roll in the immensity of space, but above all those created beings, which, possessed of life and feeling, are not gifted with the talent of understanding. So that it is, indeed, with justice, that we entertain a very high opinion of the dignity, and exalted importance, of human *reason*.

However, all this admitted,—is it, after all, the fact, that reason, with all its magnificent prerogatives, does really possess all those attributes, and

"Our incomparable Chillingworth, and some others, established for ever the old principle, that the Bible, and that only, interpreted by our best reason, is the religion of Protestants." —*Bishop Hurd, Study of Proph.*

"The Protestant acknowledges no universal head; nor deems the church itself, acting even by its legitimate rulers, to be either gifted with infallibility, or vested with such authority as may annul the right of its individual members to appeal to the Scripture itself."—*Dr. Van Mildert, Bampton Lect.*

rights, which the reformers, and the reformed churches, have been pleased to give it? The reader, if he will reflect with *candor*, and attention, will, I am convinced, think, Not. Thus, for example, let him only consult, for a moment, the annals of *experience*. Let him, for instance, in the first place, look at the state of the pagan world, during the brightest periods of its learning, and supposed illumination.

He sees at once the most monstrous errors; the most corrupted maxims, and the most unsocial opinions, combined, and blended, with the few truths, which nature, and the necessity of things, compelled them to retain. Let him remark the disputes, the contradictions, the absurdities, of the schools of the philosophers. There is hardly a truth, which these men, though guided by their reason, did not deny,—a duty, which they did not disregard,—an obligation, which they did despise. It was reason, they solemnly proclaimed, that induced them to believe in the divinity of a Jupiter, a Venus, a Bacchus, &c. It even sanctified vice, and deified corruption. In short, the whole history of human reason, during the most distinguished eras of pagan wisdom, is little else than the history of contradictions, absurdities, and vice. Whence, that well-known saying of Cicero, "Nihil tam absurdum, quod non dicatur ab aliquo philosophorum." Such are the effects of reason, when it presumes to judge, and determine, for itself.

In the next place, let us consider the character, and fruits, of human reason, as we see it exercised,

even at present, under the beams, and influences, of Christian knowledge. Alas, we find it, even here, a very imperfect guide to truth, and a very feeble barrier against incertitude. We find it, on the contrary, made use of, every where, as the very principle of error, and the basis of incredulity. We find it a torrent, which is furiously breaking down all the mounds, both of piety, and Christian wisdom, For, what is the truth, which reason does not deny? or what the falsehood, which it does not defend? It is incessantly employed in combating every good, and in supporting every bad cause. There is not a nation, nor a place, in which men have have affected, or affect, to take reason for their guide, but present to us the spectacle, not only of different, but of the most conflicting, and contradictory opinions. What one individual deems true, another, we remark, finds false. What this man looks upon as wise, his neighbour ridicules as nonsense. Indeed such, I conceive, is the character of human reason, that, let any two, and even well-instructed persons start from any one given point,—going on, reasoning, and aiming at the self-same conclusion,—the consequence will be, that they will not have advanced three steps, before they separate, and divide. In fact, I say too much,—for, let only the same person, taking his reason for his guide, attempt, under its direction, to pry into the nature, or secret, of any difficult, and important subject,—it will be found, that he will soon, and incessantly, differ from himself, alternately, and perhaps in the space of a few

days, adopting, and rejecting; believing, and disbelieving, the very same opinion; and this, too, with the very same degree of confidence, and conviction. The case is, that reason, with all its magnificent endowments, is a very feeble, fluctuating thing;—the easy dupe of passion, of prejudices, of interests, &c. It is dependant upon a thousand contingencies, accidents, and circumstances,—upon the nature of organization; upon health, climate, affections, love, hatred, education, and so on. For, all, and each of these, give a bias to our judgments, and a colouring to our opinions. They are the sources of those endless, countless, contradictions, differences, and fluctuations, which we find so common, not only in the walks of society, but in the mind even of the selfsame reasoning individual.*

* Both the ancient and modern schools, of what we call "Philosophy," attest frequently the weakness, and imperfections, of human reason. Thus, for example, Plato says, "The plenitude of knowledge is found only in God. Man possesses merely a trifling fragment of it." But, it is asked—"Could not man, then, with this trifling fragment, contemplate steadfastly, and firmly seize, some truth or other?" "No," replied Aristotle, "just as certain birds cannot bear the brilliancy of the sun, so neither can man's reason support, without being dazzled, the bright beams of truth." (Met. L. 2.) "The only thing," says Pliny, "which is certain, is this,—that nothing is certain; and that nothing is more wretched, or more proud, than man. Solum certum, nihil esse certi; et homine nihil esse miserius, aut suberbius."

"Human reason," says Bayle, "is too weak to conduct man to any certain knowledge of the truth. It is a principle of destruction, not of edification. Its great property is to create in-

Trace, next, the effects, which reason has produced in the minds, and on the conduct, of the men, who adopted its judgment, as the rule of their belief. No sooner had the reformers proclaimed what they called the "glorious charter of Christian liberty," than, straight every form of error sprang up under its captivating influence; and multitudes,—even many of the reformers themselves,—became infected with the poison of infidelity;—insomuch that Melancthon, contemplating the awful scene, and considering the bearings of the licentious principle, exclaimed emphatically, "Great God! what a tragedy have we not been preparing for posterity!"* He tells us, that he traced its effects with horror, and trepidation; foretelling, at the same time, that no mounds, or barriers, would ever arrest the torrent of its de-

certitude, and to turn about incessantiy from right to left, in order to perpetuate doubts." *(Art. Manich.)* "Every thing," says Voltaire, "within the circle of human things, and human sciences, only forms one empire of uncertainty, and doubt." *(Let. à D'Alembert)* Whence, also, it is, that we find the schools of our philosophists doubting, contesting, or denying, every truth.

* "In the catalogue of human errors, there is not, perhaps, one more glaringly absurd, than that, which substitutes the private judgment of every individual Christian for the authority of the church, in deciding religious controversies. It has no warrant in Scripture:—it is opposed to the plainest maxims of reason, and to the legal institutions of every civilized society. It is, itself, the very essence of all division, and separation: and as far as it extends, produces the same disorganization in the church of God, as a revolution does in a commonwealth."—*Dr. Boyle, Reply to Magee.*

vastations. (Ep. xiv. L. 4.) Ere long, appeared Socinus; when the virus of deism was found to circulate through every vein of the reformation. It is true, many rigid theologians expressed very feelingly their reprobation of the distressing evil. They deplored it sincerely. But, then, the misfortune was,—there existed no remedy for its correction. The tree bore its fruits; and though bad, and bitter, yet there were no means in Protestantism to hinder them from ripening. Thus, Germany, and Holland, became crowded with hosts of freethinkers. In France, Jurieu informs us, the Protestant ministers had long aimed at the destruction of Christianity itself: "Ils formoient," he says, "dans les églises reformées de France ce malheureux parti, qui conjuroit contre le Christianisme." In this country, the case was perhaps equally deplorable. Indeed, it is a fact, that Voltaire, and the general body of our modern philosophists, very frequently acknowledge, that they have borrowed their chief doctrines of infidelity from the schools of Protestant England.*

* Voltaire frequently asserts, that the philosophy of the French was brought to them from England. "It is true," he remarks, "philosophy is greatly perfected in France; but still we owe it to the English, who have taught us to reason boldly."—*Let. à Mad. du Deffand.*

Madame De Stael makes nearly the same observations. "The abstract theory of impiety," she says, "was born in England, although the English are unwilling to admit its consequences. The French writers were not its discoverers: but they had the courage to make its application."—She elsewhere remarks, that "Locke's principles have been the chief cause of our modern infidelity."

But, let us, too, once again, cast our eyes upon the general state of the Protestant churches, at the present period,—regulated, as they profess to be, by the genuine rule of the Reformation,—the pure dictates, and suggestions, of enlightened reason. Why, what a spectacle do they not, all of them, every where, exhibit,—what a scene of confusion, anarchy, and disbelief! In this *wise* nation, for example, we possess above a hundred organised religions; whilst, perhaps, in each religion, no two individuals exactly believe alike.—In Germany, Baron Starke, Muller, and a multitude of other writers, inform us, there is not so much as one single Christian dogma, but what is publicly, and systematically, denied by the pastors of the Protestant churches.* In Geneva, it is positively forbidden to speak in the pulpit, or in the schools, of the Divinity of Christ, or of the Trinity, and original sin:— which, in other words, is forbidding the defence of Christianity itself.† In

*Protestantism is so degenerated, that little more than its mere name subsists, at the present day. At all events, it must be owned, that it has undergone so many changes, that, if Luther, and Melancthon, were to rise again, they would not know the church, which was the work of their industry. And this opinion of mine is conformable to that, which all those entertain, who are acquainted with the ancient doctrines of Protestantism, and with the actual state of its belief at the present day."—*Starke, Entretiens.*

†Speaking of Geneva, Grenus, another Protestant, writes thus: "Les ministres de Genève ont déjà *franchi la borne immuable.* Ils ont donné la main aux Déistes, et aux ennemis de lafoi. Ils rougissent dans leurs catéchismes de faire mention

France, the case is similar. There, with perhaps hardly an exception, the reformed pastors are acknowledgedly Socinians.—But, in short, no where,—in no one Protestant church.—is there so much as the slenderest shadow of Christian unity. No where,—in no part of Europe,—does there remain little more than a mere remnant of the original tenets of the first apostles of the Reformation. There is no where a minister, so unenlightened, or so bold, as now confidently to come forward, and preach the antiquated doctrines of a Luther, a Zuinglius, a Muncer, &c. It is their general boast, that better instructed now, and more liberal than formerly, they have cast away the absurd prejudices, and ignorances, of their early predecessors. Not, however, that these men are not equally real Protestants as were their predeces-

du péché originel, sans lequel l'incarnation du Verbe éternel n'est plus nécessaire. Ils attenuent tout ce qui, dans nos livres sacrés, tient, ou du mystère, ou du miracle. On donne à cette conduite le nom de système libéral. Cela s'appelle marcher avec le siècle."—*Correspondence.*

Thus, its present professor of theology attests, that "the Genevan confessions of faith have all died away, of illness, and old age."—*Idem.*

It is in consequence of these innovations, the same writer observes, that, whilst multitudes of the Genevans are sinking into infidelity, multitudes also are returning to the pale of the ancient church. "You delight," he says addressing the pastors of Geneva,—"you delight the Catholic clergy, who had long since foretold you, that the Reformation would lead to Deism. Certain it is, that these men have converted great numbers to Catholicity. And I know, that a still greater number are on the point of re-entering that church."—*Idem.*

sors. They are precisely as much so; be their belief, or even their unbelief, what they may: because *Protestantism*, according to that accurate definition of Dr. Burgess with which I have ushered in this treatise,—consists simply *in the abjuration of Popery*. [See Illustration, D]

Wherefore, contemplating the effects, which the alleged rights of *reason* every where produce;—beholding the errors, the confusion, and infidelity, which it generates,—it becomes difficult to imagine how such a principle can really have been instituted by the divine wisdom, to be the foundation of the Christian's faith. If, indeed, such is the fact, then also it is just equally certain, that the principle of religion is, at the same time, the very principle of anarchy, and falsehood; of doubt, and incredulity;—a proposition, surely, which is just as palpably absurd, as it is evidently false.*

* What constitutes an awful circumstance in the erection of human reason into the tribunal of belief, is this,—that it thus becomes, not only the source of endless errors, but, moreover, their justification. For, if each one is the judge, and arbiter, of his own opinions,—if men are under no obligation of believing any doctrines, save such as are satisfactory to their own understandings,—then, also, it is impossible, with any consistency, to condemn them, either for the rejection of any truths, which *to them* appear absurd; or for the admission of any falsehoods, which, *to their apprehensions*, seem divine. The Protestant, who in either case, condemns them, violates his own principles. He may say, indeed, to one of these unfortunate beings,—"The truths, which you reject, are, in my eyes, quite manifest, and certain." The man, at once, replies,—"It may,

VII. The next principle that is cited, as another means of ascertaining the truth; and as the foundation of security,—is *sentiment*,—that is, the feelings,

no doubt, be so: and the thing is very possible. You, therefore, do right to believe them. But, they do not appear so to *me*. To me, they appear, on the contrary, completely contradictory, and absurd: and as your reason says "Yes," so mine says "No." Now, reason for reason, and conviction for conviction, why is not my reason, and my conviction, as good as yours? But, at all events, if it be the fact,—as you allow it is,—that the judgment of each individual is the appointed guide, and arbiter, of his belief,—if this be so, why then allow me to follow *mine*, as you very properly think it right to follow yours."

"Let us suppose," says an elegant writer, "the Lutheran, the Calvinist, and the Socinian, met together in serious consultation,—each, reasoning, and deducing his inferences, from the same favourite maxim,—"the glorious light of human reason." The Lutheran begins thus: "I see very clearly, and my best judgment sanctions my conviction, that the Bible is a work dictated by the Holy Ghost,—except, indeed, certain books, which my understanding forbids me to admit. In like manner, I see also with equal certitude, that Jesus Christ is really present in the Eucharist;—not, however, as the Catholic is pleased to explain his presence; but as I understand it, myself."—"How grossly," exclaims the Calvinist, "are you mistaken! for, I discover very plainly in the sacred volume,—and my reason, my feelings, my best convictions, confirm me in the opinion,—that Christ is not present at all in the Eucharist, either after the manner in which you explain the mystery, or in the way in which the Catholics understand it. I see manifestly, that he is not there in any way; and that the bread and wine are neither more nor less than the bare figure of his body and blood."—"Well," replies the Socinian to both of these believers, "you are, both of you, pitiful blunderers;—both of you, alike unreasonable, and alike deceived. You, neither of you,

and convictions, of a mind, satisfied with the supposed certitude of its own belief; and of the divinity of the sect, it follows. This too, is an argument, which, amongst multitudes of well-disposed individuals,—the ardent, above all, the simple, and illiterate, is used incessantly; and used always with an expression of peculiar satisfaction, both as the proof, and confirmation, of their respective tenets, or religions, whatsoever these chance to be. However, the pretension is at least equally feeble as that which I have been discussing. For which reason, I shall devote very few observations to it.

And what, then, are *sentiments*, or feelings, in reality? Why, they are any thing, or every thing, that you please. They are all the follies, and infirmities; all the dreams, and visions, of the hnman mind. They are assurances, devoid of any foundation;—fears, the effect of melancholy; and melancholy, the effect of bile. They are likings, the fruit of par-

understand the Bible. For, I discover evidently by the dictates of my reason, and by the strongest suggestions of my feelings, not only that Christ is not present in the Eucharist, after any manner whatsoever, but even that there does not exist any revealed mystery whatsoever,—neither Eucharist, nor Trinity, nor Incarnation; and that Jesus Christ is at most a great, and important Prophet."

Thus it is, that, adopting the rule of Protestantism and following exactly its directions, men deduce from it the most opposite, and contradictory conclusions; making it serve,—as it equally does serve,—to sanction any error, or to set aside any truth. For, if men are allowed to judge as they please, they must also, of course, be allowed to believe as they please.

tiality; and dislikings, the creatures of prejudice. They are, in short, every possible shape of illusion, extravagance, and error. Insomuch that if feelings were to be admitted as the criterions of certitude, and right, there would, at once, be an end, both of truth and piety; of order, morality, and virtue. For, it is a fact, which no one will controvert, that there is not a form of falsehood, and fanaticism; not a practice of superstition, or of vice itself, but has been sanctioned, and even sanctified, under the plea, and pretext, of feeling.

The circumstance, however, which, alone, suffices to prove, that feelings are not the medium, instituted by the divine wisdom, as the real criterions of what is true, and right, is the simple fact of that confusion of religions; that variety, and contradiction, of opinions which they have, every where, generated. A Being, such as our holy Legislator, and who is wisdom itself, cannot possibly have been the author of a rule, which produces effects like these. And yet we find, that, however opposite any doctrines, or contradictory any religions, may chance to be, still do their respective advocates believe them, each, with the same stern conviction, and defend them with the same share of confidence. The case is, that the feelings of true, and false; of right, and wrong, vary, every where, with the varieties of the human character; and are dependent upon a thousand adventitious circumstances,—upon education, habits, constitution, times, seasons, fashions, &c. There is

hardly a question, or opinion, but what strikes different men in different ways; nay, sometimes, even the very same man, upon different occasions, and at different seasons: insomuch that what seems true, to-day, will seem false, and absurd, to-morrow. Whence, also, it is a common, if not general case, that, whenever men go on consulting but the suggestions of their feelings, they are sure to proceed from error to error, and from illusion to illusion; until, by a very natural progress, they advance from error, and illusion, to incertitude, and doubt;—and thence, by an easy descent, to incredulity, or indifference. Indeed, whether it so chance, that men follow the impulse of their feelings, or the suggestions of their reason, they arrive, ere long, at one or other of these awful terms,—the most fatal boundaries of the human intellect. Or if, indeed, certain minds do not reach the dreadful gulf, the happy circumstance is owing, not so much to their strength, and talents, as to the fortunate influences of their weakness, and timidity.*

* There are, no doubt, a great multitude of Protestants, who, fortunately for themselves, as well as happily for society, do not duduce from their own leading maxim all the consequences which it contains. Containing in itself every possible form of error, that maxim, if followed with consistency, conducts to an abyss, which the pious Protestant contemplates with horror, and consternation. However, this is not the question. It is not so much to the conduct, as to the principles of the Protestants, that I now refer. Whence, I again assert, that, did the Protestant only follow up his own ruling principle,—pursuing it courageously through all its various bearings, and ramifica-

VIII. Besides the two mediums, thus briefly stated, I have cited a third, which its advocates are pleased to consider as, of all others, the best, and surest criterion of the true religion. This is *the spirit of inspiration.* But this, again, is a subject upon which I shall not dwell. For, to undertake to convince the sober-minded, and the enlightened, of the emptiness of such pretext, would be superfluous; and to attempt to undeceive the fanatic, and the enthusiast, who are the dupes of its delusions, would be unavailing. To correct the errors of the understanding is, in general, a very difficult task; but to reform, or remove, the errors of sentiment, when once they are exalted to fanaticism, is next to an impossibility. In this state, they form a mental fever, which no remedy can reach, nor any restorative subdue. For in this state, men consider their feelings, not only as the dictates of wisdom; but as the voice, and impulse, of the Holy Ghost, which, of

tions, up to its ultimate conclusion, the general result would be,—as, indeed, we see it, for ever, verified,—that either he would sink early into Socinianism,—rejecting the revealed mysteries of religion; or else, he would repose, in complete indifference. His happy retention of any remnant, or mystery, of revelation, is a piece of inconsistency. At all events, the faith of the Protestant, who follows up his own principles,—if it must be called "faith," and if he do retain any,—is simply an *opinion*, suggested by the dictates of his own reason; or an *idea*, or *thought*, conformable to the feelings of his own likings, and partialities.

course, they deem it an act of irreverence to disobey.*

The convictions of inspiration have been, at every period, common amongst the various sects, and members, of the reformation. They animated vast multitudes of its first adherents. They, once, inflamed, and fired, half the population of this country;—as it is unfortunately too true, that they still continue to cheat an immense portion of its community. At the early part of the Reformation, the claim to inspiration was the great lever, by which the artful were wont to excite the passions of the violent, and to deceive the credulity of the simple. At present, and above all, in this nation,—it is the argument, by which multitudes defend doctrines the most preposterous, and profane. The idea is flattering to self-love, and to the imagination. For

* "They say, that the Holy Ghost, if properly invoked, decides for each person upon all doubts. This opinion is not only absurd, but exceedingly impious. It supposes that the Holy Ghost abides outside that church, which he was sent to enlighten, and direct: and that he diffuses his light, and grace, to men, who blaspheme, or venerate, as their judgment dictates, the same truth: That He, who is charity itself, dwells with heresy, which is impiety;—That He, who is the uniting love of the Father and the Son, teaches the mort discordant opinions;—That He, who is the God of peace and unity, warrants, by his inspiration, strife and discord;—That he taught, Calvin to condemn, what he instructed Luther to dogmatise; and inspired Luther to curse, what he had taught Calvin, and Zuinglius, to preach;—that he instructed Cranmer to adopt half a dozen formularies of faith, and Latimer to disregard both truth and duty."—*Dr. Doyle, Reply to Magee.*

which reason, it is easily impressed. And hence, in the history of Protestantism, that long series of excesses, extravagances, and follies, which are the disgrace, both of reason, and religion. We see even,—and this, too, very frequently,—vice itself inculcated as a virtue; the grossest falsehoods boldly taught, and confidently believed, as essential truths; and the most profane disorders committed, as acts of exalted piety.*

*I might very easily cite a multitude of examples in proof of the above assertions. Thus, for instance, the Anabaptists solemnly proclaimed, that they had received a positive command from God to put to death the wicked; to confiscate their property; and to establish a new kingdon, composed solely of the just. Their leader, and apostle, Bocker, asserted, that God had made him a present of Amsterdam, and of several other towns. He therefore, deputed some of his followers to go, and take possession of them. Accordingly, they attempted to do this;—going about the streets, and presenting themselves before the public, in a state of absolute nakedness.—*Brandt's Hist.* t. 1. Another of these men,—Herman,—urged on by the impulses of the Spirit, declared himself the Messias,—calling loudly upon the people to murder all priest, and magistrates. In like manner, we know the disorders, which, at different periods, have been committed in this cuuntry by the various classes of its inspired fanatics,—by its families of love; by its fifth-monarchy men; by its followers of George Fox the Quaker, &c. As detailed even by Wesley himself, by Fletcher, and Sir Richard Hill, what a mass of frightful errors, and of profane and impious principles, have there not been taught, and forcibly inculcated, by a multitude of the preachers, and defenders, of Methodism. Some, nay many, of these, have taught, that sin,—even the most dreadful sins of incest, adultery, fornica-

These effects are at once the evidence of the emptiness of the alleged pretension;—which, in fact, is an insult to the wisdom, and perfections, of the Almighty. But without appealing to any such disorders, the circumstance alone of the *incoherencies* of the men, who have affected to be guided by it, is sufficient to point out its fallacy. The suggestions of the Holy Ghost are, of course, always uniform, and consistent;—as such also is the character of truth itself. Whereas, among the men that have laid claim to the heavenly favour, we find that every thing is replete with contradiction, and incongruity. Precisely as their fancies, or feelings, chanced to vary, just so, in like manner, do their doctrines. They had, each of them, their own sentiment and conviction;—each asserting with confidence, what the others,—with equal confidence, denied. So that referring to the pretendedly inspired religions of these men, we discover, that not so much as any two of them do any where agree together. Thus, for example, we have recently seen our Wesley, and Whitfield, each arrogating to himself the sacred gift of inspiration, and each delivering doctrines diametrically opposite to one another. Whence, it follows, that the alleged claims to inspiration, are at best, but mere illusions; and that the strong convictions, under which the sacred privilege has been, and is still, so of-

tion, &c.—so far from being injurious to salvation, are, on the contrary, useful, and advantageous.

"I have frequently written, and spoken much, in my own spirit," says Wesley, "when I thought I was writing, and speaking, entirely by the assistance of the Spirit of God."

ten asserted, evince nothing more nor less than the enthusiam, the folly, or the weak credulity, of the men who have pretended to it. Conviction,—even the most powerful and invincible conviction,—has often animated the very worst, and most desperate, fanatics.

IX. To the aid of reason, and to the sanctions of sentiment and inspiration, the Protestant, it is true, calls in the aid of the *sacred Scriptures;*—appealing constantly, and confidently, to their testimony; and reposing his convictions upon their presumed authority. This is, indeed, one of the chief,—if not the best,—stronghold of his defence. And it is because the Catholic does not exactly approve of this mode of deciding the truth, or the falsehood, of any doctrine, that he is so severely condemned, as the enemy of the word of God. This is even a subject, which forms the great theme of those countless publications, which are unceasingly issuing from the press, against Popery; and above all, it is that which fires the zeal and animates the eloquence of our modern hosts of Bibliomaniacs. Wherefore, since both the imputation and the question itself, are so important, I will, hence, pause, at some length, upon them. And first, I will state the opinion, which the Catholic entertains respecting the sacred volume; evincing, how groundless is the accusation of our supposed hostility, either to the divine Book, or to its circulation.

The fact, then, is, that the church of Rome, so far from being an enemy to the Bible, considers its possession as the most valuable of its treasures; and so

far from being averse to its circulation, she, on the contrary, wishes to see it dispersed through every corner and cottage, of the Christian universe,—*provided only* that its translations be correct; and that men read it, in the dispositions of humble, and prudent piety. We deem it a peculiarly fortunate and happy circumstance, that the Christian religion,—although, indeed, it was established without the aid of any written word,—should have its annals, and its written code of doctrines. It is well, that the faithful should possess the authentic registers of their faith, and the titles of their future expectations; well, that, amidst the trophies of error, and the monuments of incertitude, and incredulity,—truth should equally,—and still more,—have its trophies and its monuments too. It is well, that, whilst books without end, and number, attest the thoughts of *man*, there should at least be *one* to attest the thoughts of *God*.

But, the utility, and advantages, of the Scriptures are, still farther, rendered evident from the cosideration of the following circumstances,—that, precisely as tradition serves to explain, and determine, the sense of the sacred pages, so also do these same pages, in return, serve to prove the antiquity of tradition; and to confirm, and strengthen, its authority. They show, that religion, its dogmas, and its duties, are, at all times, binding and irrevocable. They fix, or contribute to fix, the language,—and consequently, too, the stability,—of the public faith. Whilst moreover, it is true, that, without their aid, and testimony, a variety of facts, instructions,

&c., which help powerfully to move the heart, and to enlighten the understanding, would either, by this time, be unknown, or at all events, known but to few; they present to us truths, the most sublime; and injunctions, the most important,—designed, for the regulation of the church; the order of society; and the conduct, and satisfaction, of individuals. Whence, St. Paul says: "All scripture is given by inspiratiou of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; in order that the man of God may be made perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Such are the Scriptures; and such as these, the notions, which the Catholic entertains of their sanctity, their utility, and their benefits;—revering them, as the most precious and important gift, that the wisdom and goodness of the Almighty has bestowed upon his creatures.

With all these advantages, then,—and seeing, that the sacred volumes have been lent to us for the above-cited purposes,—seeing this, is it not, for these reasons, but a piece of consistency to suppose, that the understandings of men, assisted, at the same time, by the instincts, and impulse, of their feelings, are competent, with these aids, to judge, and determine, what, in religion, it is wise, and proper, to believe; and what it is right, and prudent, to reject? Such as this, no doubt, is the doctrine,—the necessary doctrine,—of every Protestant church, and of every consistent Protestant. All these, in the language of the "*immortal*" Chillingworth, as he is

called, exultingly proclaim, "*The Bible, the Bible, and only the Bible,* is the religion of Protestants."* And hence it is, that we hear the clergy, and the preachers, of each Protestant sect, so earnestly exhorting their respective followers to read, and study, the divine Book unceasingly. "Read it," they call out; "examine it: for it is the Book of Life. Learn from it; for it will teach you, what it is proper for you to believe, and what it is right to practise." As I have just remarked, all this is but a piece of consistency.†

* "The Bible," says Chillingworth, "is the religion of Protestants." And yet, mark, what this paragon of Protestant wisdom asserts else-where: "The books of Scripture are not the objects of our faith; and a man may be saved, who should not believe them to be the word of God." Thus, by a very strange piece of theological logic, this oracle contends, that the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants; and yet, that men may be saved without the Bible.

The language of Tillotson is almost equally singular as is that of Chillingworth: "We are not," he says, "infallibly certain, that any book of Scripture is so ancient as it pretends to be; or that it was written by the person whose name it bears; nor that this is the sense of such and such passages in it. All this may possibly be otherwise."

† "Since Protestants utterly deny the infallibility of the church of Rome, as well as of councils, fathers, and tradition, and do not pretend, themselves, to any infallible authority; what have they left for the foundation of their faith, but the infallible authority of the Scripture? Therefore they, as well as Mr. Chillingworth, are reduced to the Bible; and must cry out with him, "The Bible, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants."—*Maizeaux, Life of Chillingworth.*

Since, then, it is thus contended, that it is the privilege, and duty, of men to interpret the sacred pages, ought not the direct consequence to be,—and is it not the dictate of common sense to suppose it, —that they should, therefore, be competent to understand them? Such consequence is, no doubt, palpable:—else, the reading, and examination, become nugatory, and unavailing. Well; and do they, then, understand,—or are they competent to explain, the mysterious volumes? This is indeed a question, which requires no discussion whatever. *They do not understand them.* Even the learned themselves, left to their own talents, do not understand them. The truth is,—and it is the concession of the most enlightened scholars,— that, amongst all the variety of books in the whole order of literature, there is not one single work, that is more obscure, more perplexing, and difficult to be understood, than the sacred Scriptures, proof, this alone, that they never were designed by the eternal wisdom to be subjected to the interpretation of each private individual. "Open," says Dr. Balgui, "Open your Bibles, take the first page that occurs in either Testament; and tell me, without disguise, is there nothing in it too hard for your understanding? If you find all before you clear, and easy, you may thank God for giving you a privilege, which he has denied to many thousands of sincere believers." Accordingly, referring to the opinions of even the most learned Protestants, we constantly find, that, whenever they pretend, or attempt, to interpret the holy pages by

the light of their own private reason, and the dictates of their own feelings, they not only, all, differ amongst themselves, just equally as do the ignorant, and the simple, but they plunge, many of them, into errors, which are, sometimes, as pernicious as they are absurd. Their opinions are as various as their respective characters; and as numerous almost, as their persons. Yes, and not only this,—but even the creeds, and symbols, of the reformed churches, —although composed by the wisdom, and policy, of the learned; and reposing professedly upon the plainest texts of Scripture;—and designed to create a something like unity amongst the public;—even these are, all, at variance with each other. So that, no where, amongst all the innumerable sects of Protestantism, do any two of these important, but singular instruments agree together. [See Illustration, E.]

From these few reflections, therefore,—or rather, from the consideration of these facts,—it ought, I conceive, to appear but reasonable to the candid mind to conclude, that, divine, and useful, as are the Scriptures, yet, being also obscure, and difficult to be understood, they are not, for this reason, designed by the eternal wisdom to be subjected to the interpretations of men's private judgment. For, every where, and on every occasion, does experience attest this fact,—that, let the talents, the learning, the industry, and even the dispositions, of men be what they may, yet whensoever they have attempted to interpret the sacred volume by the light of

their own reason, and to form their own opinions, respecting the doctrines of religion, by the suggestions of their own feelings, they have uniformly and constantly, not only differed widely amongst themselves, but fallen, many of them, into the grossest errors and contradictions. But then, too, to contend, —as the consistent Protestant must contend,—that *all* men,—even the most illiterate, and simple; men of every character,—the immoral, and the vain, just equally as the virtuous, and the humble;—to contend, that all these should read, and explain, the awful volume,—this, surely, is a piece of absurdity, which no wisdom,—save the wisdom of such men as Dr. Ryder, and our modern bibliomaniacs, can pretend to explain away.* Good God! to thrust the

* If there existed no other reasons for withholding the Scriptures from the general use of the public, but the gross errors and corruptions with which the Protestant translations have always, and every where, abounded,—this circumstance alone, abstracting from every other, is a sufficient justification of the Catholic church for having imposed certain restrictions, and regulations in their regard. For, the word of God, when ill, and falsely translated, is no longer the word of God, but the word of man, and the source of error.

Now, the fact is undeniable,—and indeed, undenied,—that all the early translations of the Scriptures, which were undertaken, and published, either by the first reformers, or by any Protestant writers, were notoriously falsified, and corrupted. Thus, for example, speaking of the translation, which was given by Luther, Zuinglius says of it, "Thou corruptest, O Luther, the word of God. Thou art an open, and insolent perverter of the Scriptures. We, once, indeed, esteemed thee, beyond, measure, but we now blush at thy profaneness." Such, too, as

divine Book, as these sages do, into the hands of the poor, and wild, and ignorant Irish,—or into those of the just equally ignorant English,—and bid all

this,—not one jot better,—was the conduct of all the other pretended translators of the sacred volumes. Thus D'Israeli, describing the character of our English Protestant translations, until the year 1660, says of them: "Our English Bibles were suffered to be so corrupted, that no books ever swarmed with such innumerable errata. These errata, unquestionably were, in great part voluntary omissions, interpolated passages, and meanings formed and forged, for certain purposes." It was hence, that, in an address, presented to James the First, the divines of Lincoln observes to him, "Our translation is absurd, and senseless, perverting, in many places, the meaning of the Holy Ghost."

In like manner, if any learned reader will consult the modern versions of the sacred volumes, he will find, that,—although criticism, and biblical learning, have attained a degree of perfection, which, until lately, they had not,—yet, are they still, exceedingly unfaithful, and incorrect. So, for example, the "British and Foreign Bible Society" have edited, as they boast, about eighty-nine new translations of the Scriptures. And yet, it is a fact, that, among the whole number, there is not so much as *one*, that is even tolerably accurate—not even the Irish, nor the Welsh. "With the exception," say the Quarterly Reviewers, "of three or four individuals, not one of those, who have been employed under the auspices of the British and Foreign Bible Society, either in translating, or editing the Scriptures, has received the benefit of a regular, and learned education. Whence, their existing versions will be remembered hereafter, only for the errors, and blunders, which disfigure them." "It has even"—they add—"been openly, and repeatedly asserted, that, among the foremost of the Society's continental supporters, appear many individuals, notorious for entertaining heretical, or infidel opinions. Whence the persons in question have succeeded in making serious in-

these learn from it the genuine doctrines of religion,—this is one of those acts of folly, for which it is only possible to account, either by the extravagancies of fanaticism, or the horror, and dread, of Popery. But, in short, I have no hesitation in saying this—that, if the reason of each private individual be the interpreter of the Bible,—as by the essential rule of Protestantism it is ;—if it be thus, that men must find out the truth, and grope their way to the real sanctuary of religion, then also do I think it true, that the sacred Book (seeing, that it is so difficult, and obscure) is a very unhappy, and a very fatal present. For, in this case, men will for ever dispute ; for ever doubt ; for ever remain uncertain ; and unable to ascertain its genuine signification. So that God will thus have spoken to us to very little purpose.* [See Illustration, F.]

novations in the received versions." Need I, then, ask, whether, under circumstances such as these, the Catholic church does not act prudently, by imposing certain restrictions upon the faithful, in relation to the sacred volume ?

* "Books," says Rousseau, consulting the dictates of common sense, "books are the sources of endless disputes. Human language is not sufficiently clear. Were God himself to speak to us in our languages, still he would not speak so clearly, but that men would find out something or other to dispute about."—*Lettre à M. Beaumont.*

In like manner, the learned Maimonides, speaking of the Jewish religion, observes : "It was a piece of wisdom, that the doctrines of our religion were not always committed to writing. By this means, were prevented those varieties of opinion, those perplexities and doubts, which were subsequently found t occur. For, perplexities, and doubts, are sure always to arise

Since, therefore, it is thus manifest, both from the dictates of common sense, and from the attestations of experience, that neither individual reason, nor

out of writings, and books. These instruments become the subjects, and sources, of dissensions, and controversies; of sects, and schisms: and in relation to business, they are rendered the causes of confusion: Hence, in my commentaries upon the Talmud, I have shown,—and the Law also itself attests the same,—that every thing was, anciently, determined by the judgment of the Sanhedrim."—*More Nevochim.*

"If," says Voltaire, "if there were not an authority to fix, and determine, the sense of the Bible, and the dogmas of religion, the consequence would then be, that there would be as many sects, as there are individuals, who read the Bible."—*Essai sur l'Hist.*

The Protestant, by the strangest mode of reasoning, maintains *that* to be wise in religion, which, in every other case of importance, he condemns, as preposterous, and wrong. So, for example, let any human legislator compose a code of laws, and proclaim, and call out to his subjects, "There, accept this. You are all, and each of you, free, and independent. You are each of you, the judges, and interpreters, of its signification. There is no one, who has any right to restrict your opinions, or to control your decisions. Therefore read, examine, it; and without appealing to any tribunals, judge; and regulate amongst yourselves, the whole order of your conduct, and your respective claims to justice, property, &c."—I need not say, that language such as this,—although it is but similar to that of every consistent Protestant theologion, would be considered, not only as a piece of folly, but as an invitation to anarchy, and revolution.

In like manner, let us imagine a set of men, pretending to instruct the public, in relation to their health; and loudly calling out to them: "Here is a treatise upon medicine. Whosoever wishes to enjoy health, and to live long, let him take this book and examine it with care; no need of any physician to

feelings, nor the pretext of inspiration, nor the light and language of the Bible, as interpreted by the suggestions of private judgment, are competent, or sufficient, to conduct mankind to the sure knowledge of the real doctrines of religion,—it should, of course, appear to follow, that, as the belief and profession of these divine truths are strictly enjoined by their sacred Author, as the necessary conditions of future happiness,—so, consequently, there ought to exist,—and therefore does exist,—some other principle, besides the above, by which this blessing may be attained;—and a principle, moreover, by means of which, the possession of the true religion may be ascertained, with such a degree of certitude, and security, as to leave no room for rational doubt upon the mind of the sincere inquirer. In reality, there is no kind of certitude, and conviction, that should be so strong, and so completely devoid of doubt, as the certitude, and conviction of Christian faith. In religion, all doubt is not only wrong, but criminal. The want of a solid basis to sustain belief must, of course, produce error, scepticism, and indifference. It is only a fixed, and sure criterion, that can create wise stability, or inspire rational conviction.

direct you. Your own feelings, and your own good sense, are, alone, sufficient to do this. It is true, the book contains many difficult, and unintelligible things. Still, if you wish to live, you must read it, and adopt it, as the only guide, and security, of your health."—Good sense feels at once the nonsense of language such as this.

X. And what, therefore (I come now to ask the important question), is that happy principle, by means of which these invaluable blessings may be obtained? Why, if the various mediums, which I have thus far discussed, be inadequate to this purpose,—then is the reply at once obvious, and incontestable. For, in this case, there remains but one medium more, by whose aid the attainment of the above benefits can be reasonably accounted for. This medium *is Authority*;—but, an authority, of course unerring, and infallible;—an authority, instituted by the wisdom of our supreme legislator;—designed by his mercy to be the guide, and instructor, of his subjects; and so established, as to preserve inviolate, till the end of time, the sacred depositum of his revelations. In religion, the means ought manifestly to correspond to the end. So that if the unity, and perpetuity, of the true faith be the necessary appendages of the sacred institute, then must there also coexist some means or other, corresponding to these benefits, by which they may be effectually attained, and secured. This means, as I have just said,—*is no other than Authority.**

* "There can be no peace in any community, no order preserved in any church or state, unless there be tribunals established, to which existing differences may be referred for decision: and if those differences relate to the truths which compose the Christian religion, it is quite impossible to put an end to them, or to quiet the minds of the disputants, unless the decision be exempt from error. Faith is not faith, if the believers

XI. That our great Legislator promulgated, and established, the doctrines, and the law, of truth,—this is a point, which, just equally with the Catholic, every Christian sect very readily admits. He did this, in the effusions of his mercy towards his creatures. However, merely to have done this was by no means enough. It was still requisite, that he should also provide for the preservation of those benefits; because they are designed to be, not temporary, but perpetual, and immortal institutions.

hesitate in doubt:—for he who doubts, is already an unbeliever. It, therefore, obviously, and necessarily follows, that, if God willed, that we should believe what he has revealed, he should either reveal his will so clearly, as that no doubt should arise with regard to its meaning,—which he has not done; or else, he should only require of us to adopt such meaning of it, as appeared to us the must probable,—a supposition, incompatible with the nature of faith;—or lastly, he should give us a tribunal, authorised to decide, so as not only to put an end to disputes, and preserve order in the church, hut which, also, by its decision, would exclude all doubt:—*whereas doubt cannot coexist with faith.* The existence, therefore, of an infallible authority in the church is not a matter of secondary import; or one, on which different opinions may be entertained: it is so necessary, that, without it, (revelation being such as it is,) the church could not exist; nor faith continue, on the earth. Without this authority, the Christian religion, from its very commencement, would have degenerated into a system of human philosophy; and private opinion would have taken the place of divine faith in the minds of men. This is, indeed, the result of the rejection of church authority, throughout the Protestant churches of France, Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, and Denmark."—*Dr. Doyle, Reply to Magee.*

It was necessary even, beyond this, to secure their preservation against all the profane mixtures of error, and the impure alloys of human corruption: —because they are intended to remain always, such precisely as they were originally,—as pure, holy, and uncontaminated, as when they came forth from the bosom of the Divinity. This, too, is obvious: and such as this, accordingly, is the order of things instituted by our great Legislator. He has even done this, in a way, which strikingly attests his own eternal wisdom; points out that knowledge of the human character, which can only belong to an infinite Being; and expresses, at the same time, that property of *unity*, which is the distinctive attribute of the works of the Almighty.

But how, then, and by what means, has he effected this? Has he done it, by committing his divine doctrines to the pages of a book;—affixing to it proofs, so peculiarly manifest, and arguments, so palpable, that the human mind cannot easily either reject, or misunderstand them? Such as this, no doubt, in the formation of a code of laws, would be the plan, and endeavour, of the political legislator, or of the human philosopher. However, who but must feel at once, that, considering the pride, and passions, the self-love, and the weaknesses, of the minds of men,— to have acted thus, would have been opening a field,—a vast, boundless field,—to endless difficulties, to strife, contention, and disunity? Who but must be sensible that, by thus flat-

tering, and addressing, the reason of the public,—authorising them to believe only what they clearly understood,—would have been, in reality, to have erected an insurmountable barrier, between man, and an incomprehensible Being? It is, consequently, hence, that the great Legislator, disdaining all the feeble and vain supports of human opinions, descends at once, and penetrates, into the very foundations of our nature, and constitution; and it is there, that he lays, and fixes, the grounds of the unity, and perpetuity, of his law. He maintains and preserves his divine truths in the thoughts of men, precisely as he maintains and preserves thought itself,—by the transmission of his sacred word,—preparing, at the same time, for the security of this transmission, by the institution of a medium, which is inviolable, and holy. That is, in other words, he has formed, and established, on earth, a regular society, under the control of a regular government, of which himself is the cornerstone. He has united together by certain exterior, and indissoluble links, that happy portion of mankind, who constitute its members; again uniting them, moreover, interiorly, by the principles of the same belief. Such as this is the character of the *real* church of Jesus Christ.

XII. The principle, as the reader knows, upon which our divine Legislator himself undertook the office of teaching, and conducting mankind, was the deputation, which he had received, for these purposes, from the sanction of his eternal Father: for, as

St. Paul remarks, "Christ glorified not himself to be made a high-priest." It was solely in virtue of this charter, as himself declared, that he inculcated his sacred doctrines, and imposed his precepts.—Wherefore, being thus deputed, and commissioned, this divine Being, in his turn, deputes, in like manner, and commissions, a new order of pastors, to whom, also, he transfers that self-same charter, which himself had received from the hands of his heavenly Father. "As the Father," he said, addressing his apostles, and through them, their successors to the end of time,—"As the Father hath sent me, even so do I send you." "Go, therefore, and teach all nations; and behold I am with you, all days, to the end of the world." Hence, exactly as Christ Jesus has said, speaking of himself,—"He, who hath sent me, is true; and I say again to the world those things which I have heard from him,"—so also, speaking of themselves, do these pastors, thus authorised, for ever, and at present, say,—"He, who hath sent us, is true; and we say again to the world those things, which we have heard from him." Mere witnesses of the divine word, these men but simply testify what they have heard from their Master; so that their testimony is no other than that of Jesus Christ himself,—precisely as the testimony of this sacred Being is but that of his eternal Father, who had sent him, and said of him, "This is my beloved Son; hear you him." It was accordingly for these reasons, that this divine Personage, addressing his apostles, says to

them, "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." Wherefore, this consequence ought to appear undeniable,—that, in order to enter into society with God,—or as the Scripture expresses it, "in order to become the children of God,"—the necessary medium is, to receive his doctrines from his church, as his church had received them from Christ, and as Christ himself had received them from the hands of his heavenly Father;—and to receive them, at the same time, with the convictions of a firm, and unhesitating faith; not only because such is the sole means of possessing the truth, but because all doubt,—even the slenderest doubt,—is an insult to the supreme authority, which has revealed it. If, indeed, these principles be once set aside, and the mere aid of reason called in to determine what are the real dogmas of revelation,—what it is necessary to believe, or proper to reject,—in such case, there must soon be an end of truth, and of all prudent, and fixed convictions. Transposed, and placed upon so weak and contemptible a basis, the sacred fabric of religion sinks, ere long, an awful and distressing ruin;—overwhelming in its fall, and under the weight of its fragments, that presumptuous principle,—human reason,—which flattered, and deceived, by the suggestions of its own pride, has vainly considered itself as strong enough to sustain the whole pressure of the immortal sanctuary.

XIII. It is, therefore, owing to the nature of divine faith; to the character in particular of its *unity*; and to the obligation of believing, and professing it, such precisely as it comes from the bosom of the Divinity, that, at every period of time,—under all the dispensations of God's mercy to his creatures,—there has always existed on earth a visible and speaking guide,—a guide, not only commissioned to instruct the public how to believe, and to act; but invested, moreover, with the authority, both to command, and to enforce obedience. In reality, if faith be essentially *one*, and at the same time unchangeable, as well as necessary, then is such medium manifestly requisite. Because it is only thus, that it can be conceived,—I do not say, easy,—but even possible, to prevent, or suppress, contentions; to remove doubts; to inspire confidence; and to maintain security, and wise conviction. Faith, without the principle of authority, leans only upon a reed. For this reason, therefore, it was, that even our divine Legislator, before he took upon himself, either to teach, or to command, established first, and rendered incontestable, the reality of his own authority to do so. He did this, by the attestation, and splendor, of his *miracles*. He performed *miracles*; thus proving his right to conduct the public; —and then only, he said to them, "Believe." It was so, too, with his apostles. They, too, in like manner,—ere they came forward to guide, and instruct mankind,—demonstrated, in the first place, their power to do so, by the blaze of *miracles*; and then

it was, that, like their great Master, they, too, called out, "Believe." In fact, authority is the sole foundation of Christian faith, precisely as it is also the basis of social order. The obedience of the *understanding* forms the character of Christian *faith*, just as the obedience of the *will* forms the character of Christian *virtue*.*

*The heretic is a man, who denies certain articles of Christian faith. The unbeliever is one, who denies Christianity itself. Now, if it be true, that every individual has the right to judge for himself, and to determine his own belief; upon what pretext can it reasonably be asserted, that either the one or the other has determined, or judged, amiss? Or how is it possible, with any consistency, to condemn either of them? Why require,—the above principle once admitted,—that they should, either of them, submit their sentiments, or their reason, to the sentiments, or reason, of other individuals, who, although they may happily chance to think and judge better, are yet, after all, just equally fallible as themselves? Wherefore, the case here is precisely this: - Either these men have a right to judge for themselves, or they have not. If they have such a right, and are allowed to judge for themselves, then has no one any claim to control their sentiments, or to impose upon them the obligation of believing otherwise than they do. If they have not such right, then let the members of the establishment, or the pastors of the Protestant churches, say so at once; and at once give up the principle of the Reformation.

In reality, so long as there exists, or as there is declared to exist, no other tribunal above that of private judgment,—so long has no one any right to prevent any individual from beleiving that to be true, which appears to be true to him. If, adopting the protestant rule, I follow it up consistently, I then, of course, believe the truth of my own opinion;—whilst another, in like manner, and with just the same right and consistency, believes perhaps directly the reverse. So that thus,

For example,—just to appeal to the dictates of common sense,—let the reader imagine (if he can imagine such an absurdity,) let him imagine such things in the order of society, as a state, or community, without a legislator;—duties to be discovered, and performed, by the dictates of each one's private understanding;—laws, whose sanctions, and obligations, are to be determined in the breast, and by the feelings, of individuals,—and so on. Why, at the mere proposal of such a system, there is no one but feels at once the grossness of its absurdity; and that it is alike repugnant to common sense, as it is inconsistent with every notion of social order. Each individual his own legislator! And yet such as this,—if not greater than this,—is the absurdity, which is involved in the leading maxim of the reformation,—rendering each one, as it does, the supreme arbiter of his own belief; and the judge of objects, which, of all others, are the most important and incomprehensible.

Laws presuppose two things,—a legislator, whose will renders them obligatory; and a visible authority to proclaim and promulgate them. Thus, should it chance, that any conflict, or seeming contradiction, takes place between various statutes;—or should any doubt arise, respecting their import, or applica-

making the supposition, that men would, all, judge for themselves, there would be as many opinions as judges; and each opinion, however false, would have the very same foundation as the truth, and would be entitled to the self-same credence and respect.

tion;—any dispute, concerning what, or which, is the real law itself;—the obvious method in all such cases, and that which alone is adapted, both to the situation, and capacity of the public, is,—not philosophically to examine the nature of the laws in themselves,—a point which very few are competent to determine, or which, perhaps, none can determine, with absolute certitude,— but simply to investigate, and ascertain, which, and what, is that law, that has been proclaimed by the voice, and sanctioned by the seal, of lawful authority,—or at least, by the voice, and sanction, of the highest authority.

If the foregoing principles are denied, the consequence must, then, manifestly be *that*, which I have so often stated,—namely, that there exists no other established basis of belief, save the judgment, which is exercised by the reason of each private individual. In this case, religion becomes just equally fluctuating, and uncertain, as is the reason of the person, who presumes, or undertakes, to judge. It becomes no longer a law, but a mere *opinion*; no longer a prudent conviction, but a rash persuasion, reposing, either upon pride, and partiality; or upon ignorance, simplicity, or fanaticism. And as, too, the judgment of one individual is by no means, according to the alleged privilege, obliged, or so much as supposed, to submit to the judgment of another, who is only his equal,—so, of course, is each one, as Bishop Watson remarks, authorised, not only to believe, but to *profess*, what, to his own understanding, appears the most rational, or true,—according to

that classic definition, which the learned prelate has thought proper to adopt, as the most accurately descriptive of the religion of the Protestant, "Et sentire quæ velit, et quæ sentiat dicere." With these maxims it is, certainly, quite impossible to reconcile that first, and essential attribute of the Christian religion,—its *unity*. They are, in fact, destructive, not only of all unity; but they are manifestly calculated to render,—as, wheresoever they are consistently followed up, they do render,—the state of every Protestant community a scene of confusion and incredulity. Their never-failing effect is to produce, in time, either irremediable doubt, or irrecoverable indifference.*

* There is something in the conduct of the established clergy, in relation to the present subject, which frequently entertains the Catholic. It is this,—that, when these gentlemen contend with the Catholics, they are sure always to employ the arms of the Dissenters,—that is, the real principles of Protestantism,—the rights of reason, and the privileges of private judgment: whereas, when they engage with the Dissenters, they are just equally sure to make use of the arms of the Catholics,—the arguments, and influences, of *authority*. This is a piece of inconsistency, and forgetfulness, of which the Dissenters very loudly complain,—reproaching those writers with the violation of the most essential rule of the Reformation; and even observing to them, that, with such notions of religion, they ought, if they had any regard for consistency, at once to declare themselves Catholics:—since the Catholic church alone is founded upon the basis of authority,—moreover, if authority ought to be respected,—is, beyond that o every other communion, the highest, the most ancient, and the most respectable. Such is the reasoning of the Dissenters.

Thus, both by the dictates of good sense, and the attestations of experience, I have conducted the reader to this conclusion,—that, in order wisely to ascertain the genuine doctrines, and the real sanctuary, of the true religion, the sole method is, to find out that society, which reposes upon the greatest visible authority. And this, too, I have likewise observed, is, at the same time, an object, so plain and manifest, that even the most simple,—did they look around them,—might discover it, without any difficulty. To discover it, little else is required than to have eyes. For, whilst the Catholic church,—venerable for its antiquity, boundless in its diffusion, resplendent in the sanctity of its members, unvarying, and invariable, in its tenets,—whilst such is the Catholic church,—the Protestant societies, meanwhile,—the creatures, all of them, of yesterday; insignificant (when considered separately) in their extent; inglorious in their founders,—are every where in a state of anarchy, and contradiction, —their followers without any fixed system of belief,—their very ministers, all, at variance amongst themselves;—under these circumstances, to ascertain, which is the best guide to truth, or which the real sanctuary of religion, should not,—*cannot*, to the *sincere* enquirer,—appear a task of any great perplexity. At all events, the considerations which I have thus presented,—simple, as they are striking,

It is similar to that, which I have already cited, of Rousseau, who says, "Prove to me, that I am bound to obey authority, and to-morrow I make myself a Catholic."

—should suffice, if not to satisfy, at least to awaken, the attention of the thoughtful, and the prudent. But, unhappily, so it is:—we live in an age of prejudice, and incredulity; at a period of sophistry, and disputation. It costs men a great deal,—such is the effect of human self-love,—to own, or renounce, their errors. Once educated, and involved in error, they struggle even against their own convictions, and shut their eyes to the plainest truths. But, as this part of my subject is so interesting, I will again resume it.

XIV. At the epoch when Luther commenced his revolutionary career, there had existed, during the long course of fifteen hundred years, a religious society,—the Catholic church,—conducted, under the guidance of one supreme head, by a body of pastors, who, in conformity with the assurances of Christ, considered themselves,—and were equally so considered by the public,—as invested with the authority to judge infallibly, and to decide irrevocably, all those questions in religion, which related to the doctrines of Christian faith. The method, in which they did this, was, not by creating new dogmas; not by citing the ancient dogmas before the tribunal of human reason, in order to examine them in themselves (for this would have been subjecting the wisdom of God to the puny wisdom of man:) but merely by the way of *testimony*, ascertaining, and verifying, the tradition, or universal faith, by the tra-

dition, or faith, of each particular church.* So, for example, when Luther, and the reformers, first began to preach, the Catholics at once called out, "These doctrines of yours were never heard of, un-

* There is not amongst the whole number of the ancient fathers of the church, so much as one, who, writing upon the doctrines of religion, does not admit the necessity of tradition, as the proper medium to know, and the established rule to interpret, them. "It is," says St. Clement of Rome, in his epistle to the faithful at Jerusalem, "it is according to this tradition, that we must teach: because people understand in different senses what is written." St. Clement of Alexandria, in his Stromata, observes, that, "those, who explain the Scripture against the tradition of the church, lose always the rule of truth." In reality, as Dr Doyle remarks, "it must be obvious to every man, who is versed at all in antiquity, that the written portion of the law was only a supplement to tradition; and that the meaning of it, wherever it is doubtful, or difficult, cannot be ascertained, unless by the light of the same tradition."

"Thus," adds the learned writer, "where do we look for decisions upon any contested matter of right, or privilege, or title, or possession, but to judges? Why do we employ solicitors, and lawyers, to plead before them, if the law itself can decide? And why have the judges themselves recourse to the common law, which is traditionary; to books of authority; to precedents; unless that neither the statutes themselves, either do, or can, contemplate all cases;—or that even if they did, they could not be justly, or wisely administered, unless the light of antiquity, and the wisdom of past times, were shed upon them?

"It is, indeed, little short of insanity in a Christian to deny the authority of the church. But, to admit it, and deny the existence, or the necessity, of tradition, is an incomprehensible absurdity,—the fruit of gross ignorance, of intolerable presumption, or of the most lamentable fanaticism."

til now. Yesterday, we had never so much as heard them spoken of. And how, therefore, can they possibly be,—or how can we think them,—true? Truth is not the creature of yesterday, or to-day: it is the object of all times, and ages: it existed from the beginning, and will continue to exist for ever; whereas, error possesses no surer characteristic than the feature of novelty. Either, then, you do not teach what Christ has taught,—and in this case we ought not to listen to you,—or else your doctrines are conformable to his. Now, in this supposition, you ought, of course, to show, that they are conformable also to those of his church. For, since he had promised to remain, all days, to the end of the world, with this divine institution; so it could not, even for one single day, teach any doctrines, save those which it had received from its sacred Founder." Such as this was the language, which the Catholics addressed to Luther, and to the first authors of the reformation. It was, in fact, upon these principles,—upon these fundamental, and immoveable principles,—that, without any process of argumentation; without any dangerous discussion of the internal nature of the Christian dogmas; without the labour of endless disputes with the authors, or advocates, of heresy,—the ancient council pronounced their irrevocable decrees; and that the whole body of the church said anathema to Arius, to Nestorius, to Eutyches, &c., and to all those daring innovators, who, like the above here-

siarchs, substituted the visions of their own fancies in room of the ancient faith.

Before the pretended reformation, never did one single sect, or even sectarist, presume to deny directly the authority of the Catholic church. Never did they so much as contest the reality, and justice, of her right to act, as the judge of faith :—nor did they ever call in question the infallibility of her decisions. They cavilled, it is true, not unfrequently, against the forms, and order, of her judgments. They contended, that the councils, which had condemned them, were not proper and lawful councils; and that they had not observed the indispensable rules of a wise and just determination. All this kind of remonstrance, and complaint, was, indeed, the very common language of the early heresiarchs. But still, never did any one of these men so much as whisper out the insolent, and fatal term,—"*Independence.*" Never did any of them pretend, that the sole judge of Christian faith is the tribunal of human reason. So forcibly, at those periods, were impressed upon their minds, and upon the minds of the whole body of the Christian public, those thundering words of our Redeemer,—"He that will not hear the church, let him be as the heathen and the publican."

Even Luther himself, when first he entered upon his bold career, still owned, and protested with sincerity,—or at least with apparent sincerity,—his humble submission to the judgment of the church. He loudly, and earnestly solicited the convocation

of a council: and although his soul seemed but an assemblage of violent passions, all fed by the force of pride,—yet did he, for some time, show himself disposed to bend down his haughty head before the tribunal of the chief pastor, and rulers, of the sacred fold. The constant practice, and opinion, of all preceding ages, confirmed and founded, as they are, upon the plainest texts of the divine word,—did not, as yet, allow him so much as even to conceive the daring idea, that men may destroy that lawful barrier, which the wisdom of our immortal Legislator has erected against the inroads of innovation, and and the intrusions of heresy. However, the continuance of these dispositions was not of any long duration. For, when, ere long, his errors were condemned in Rome;—and soon as the rapid increase of his followers had roused his courage to bolder darings;—then, giving ear only to the suggestions of his anger, and ambition, he altered at once his language; and unawed by any feelings of moderation, unrestrained by any sense of decency, he insolently, in the fury of his indignation, uttered anathema against anathema, and unfurled the standard of rebellion. Then it was,—at this awful period,—that began, in Europe, a race of error, and the war, and conflict of opinion: insomuch, that, within the short space of very few years, the public beheld a hundred new systems of religion, where, until now, they had never witnessed any more than *one*.

However, notwithstanding these disorders, and spite of all this licentiousness of opinion, it is still

true,—so deeply were the maxims of the ancient faith ingrafted in the public mind,—it is still true, that the leading principle of the Reformation did not, at once, nor yet very generally, develope itself in all its plenitude and deformity. At first, there was only a certain number of bold, and penetrating individuals,—men, possessed of that kind of character, which hardly any consequences could dismay,—that, early, descried its bearings, and at once rushed forward, and pushed on to its utmost limits. Still, the number of these was, for some time, comparatively speaking, only small. The multitude, as yet, still followed their steps with langour, and regret. They still continued to cherish some of the principal, and most prominent truths of their parent church. And what is striking,—or what should, at least, seem striking to the Protestant,—is this: that, in proportion as each new sect thought proper to preserve a greater portion of the ancient truths, —so also did it labour the more industriously to preserve amongst its adherents the principle of *authority.* In fact,—let the Protestant deny it as he will,—it is still true, that this sacred principle must subsist, wheresoever there subsists any order, or any respect for truth; or wheresoever mem admit, either any codes of morals, or any forms of worship. Essential even in the order of social life, it is doubly so in the economy, and order, of religion.*

* "Without a centre of unity; without *those ancient bounds, which our fathers have set;*—without a rallying point, to which

For this reason,—inconsistent as the thing is with the maxims of the Reformation,—it subsists, more or less, in every one of the sects of Protestantism. It subsists in them all: but it is, in them all, a usurped authority. Thus, as Montesqieu remarks, the first, and fundamental organisation of the church of England was created, and established, by the influences of despotic power,—"the will, and caprice, of a single individual," as he adds, "there ordaining, and arranging, every thing."*

all may fly;—without a tribunal of final decision, from which no appeal can be made, we shall never rest satisfied, or secure.

"This tribunal can be no other than that, which the Eternal Wisdom has appointed to preserve, with jealous care, the sacred deposit of his law,—a representative assembly of the universal church; the concurring opinion of those, whom the Holy Ghost has placed to rule it. Here, all doubts are quieted, and all dissensions allayed;—here, the weak are strengthened, and the strong are confirmed, in their faith;—here, we tread with a firm step; and while others are tossed to and fro by every wind and wave, we remain secure upon the steadfast rock. It is by this, that we preserve *the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* Through this, *we believe, and are saved.*—By this, *with one mind, and with one mouth, we glorify God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"—The Earl of Shrewsbury.

* If the Protestant will look at the thing attentively, he will at once discover, and, if candid, own, that notwithstanding all his liberty, and the boasted principles of the Reformation, he believes, after all, upon the authority of other men. Mr. Burke, indeed, remarks, that the absence of a general authority in the Protestant churches, renders the authority of its individual pastors still greater than that, which subsists amongst the Catholics; so that, without any hesitation, the Protestant will believe firmly in his parson, although he will, by no means, be-

XV. The Reformation, properly speaking, *according to its fundamental charter*,—that law, which gave it birth, and which still sustains it,—is a reli-

lieve in the universal church. However, be this as it may,—look only at the members of the established church,—the ignorant, as well as the learned. They all profess,—nay, multitudes of them even *swear*,—that they believe in the 39 articles. And yet, is it not a fact, that few, even very few, have done so much, as merely read them? Therefore, the truth is, that they believe them, under the influence and direction of authority. At an early period of the Reformation, the nation was commanded and compelled to believe, upon the word, and injunction of a mere *child*,—the Sixth Edward; and a few years later, upon the mandate of a *woman*,—the imperious Elizabeth:—insomuch, that it was declared, both illegal, and criminal, to call in question one tittle, which had been thus sanctioned by the seal of their imperial dictate. And was not this, with a witness, believing upon *authority?*

There subsists, too, still, in this country, an order of submission to authority—cruel and disgraceful thing!—which, whilst it is repugnant to the principles of Protestantism, is alike the violation of the laws, both of charity and truth. I allude to those frightful oaths, which are taken by our legislators, magistrates, &c. These men, upon the authority of an act of parliament,—an instrument, formed, of course, by a set of laymen,—solemnly *swear*, that the religion of the Roman Catholic is a system of *idolatry*. To take such oaths, upon the sanction of such authority, is manifestly a piece of subserviency, which every consistent Protestant must condemn. But, then, to take such oaths, without having first seriously discussed the truth, or falsehood, of the awful imputation,—this, besides being an act of blind submission to authority, is, at the same time, a solemn mockery of religion. But, the real fact, I believe, is this,—that, seldom indeed, does a single individual give himself the trouble so much as merely to reflect upon the awful and momentous subject. [See Illustration, H.]

gious republic (I might say rather, *a religious anarchy*,) in which power, under the guidance of no fixed rule, aud without the assurance of any stability, becomes the property either of any audacious demagogue, who has the means, and boldness, to subdue the public mind; or of the canting hypocrite, who has the art to impose upon its credulity. Still, however, notwithstanding that the maxims of this charter do thus positively exclude the interferences of authority,—still it is the fact, that the respect for *authority* is so deeply imprinted upon the feelings of mankind, that nothing can efface it. It will, and must, continue to subsist, so long as men coutinue to believe any thing. It will perish, only when perishes the last of truths. [See Illustration, G.]

XVI. The Protestant theologians, many of them, did not refuse, for some time, to admit the authority of the first ecumenical councils; insomuch that they opposed their decisions to the tenets of the Arians and Socinians. They even spoke,—*a few of them*,—now and then, with a certain degree of respect, of the ancient Fathers; citing these, on some occasions, with honour; supporting their own opinions by the sanctions of their testimony; and attributing to them a considerable share of authority in the determination of controverted doctrines. The fact is, no doubt, manifest, that, wheresoever religion is not an empty name, it is wise, and prudent, to trace its doctrines,—and reasonable to expect to find them, such precisely as Christ Jesus had delivered them,—in the writings of those learned, and holy men, who lived so close to the age of the first apostles. If

this be not the case, then it must necessarily be contended, that the doctrines of salvation,—those sacred truths which the Divine Wisdom came down from heaven to announce to men,—began simply to be understood, fifteen hundred years after their publication; and that Luther, after the apostles, was in reality the first of Christians. But, surely, common sense revolts at the absurdity of such ideas. However, be this as it may,—the circumstauce is still true, that such as these are the propositions, which the Protestant is under the necessity of maintaining, on all those occasions, when, overwhelmed by the testimonies of the Fathers, he finds himself compelled to own, that the faith and doctrines of those illustrious defenders of the Christian church were, in no respect, different from the faith and doctrines of the Catholic, at the present day;—that they believed, and taught, precisely what the pastors of the Catholic church believe, and teach, in the nineteenth century;—and that it is impossible to read their immortal works, without tracing, in almost every page, the express condemnation of the tenets of the Reformation.*

* The identity of the doctrines of the Catholic church with those of the ancient Fathers, is a point conceded by many of the most learned amongst the Protestant writers,—by such men as Grotius, Leibnitz, Starke, &c. and even by some of the members of the established church of this country. Thus, for example, Grotius, in a letter to his brother, says to him, "The church of Rome is not only Catholic, but she, moreover, presides over the Catholic church. Whatsoever doctrines are taught in common by the Western church, united to the

In relation, in the next place, to the posterior councils,—the perplexity, and embarrassment, of the reformers, or of the Protestant divines in general, were not much less awkward, than they were in the preceding cases. "Either," said the Catholics —and we say so still to every Protestant,—"either you consider the ancient councils as infallible, or not. In the former supposition, their infallibility, you should conceive, must have been founded,—for, there is no other basis,—upon the power, and promises, of Jesus Christ,—upon a power, and promises, unlimited, and unconfined; and whose effects it depends not upon you to restrict to any age, or to restrain to any period. If the church were infallible, during the course of six centuries,—she, then, is just equally such, at the present day; and she will also continue to be such, for ever. Wherefore, in opposing her decisions, you oppose, in reality, the authority of Christ himself. For, amongst all the various arguments, and objections, which you al-

church of Rome, these I find taught unanimously, both by the Greek, and the Latin Fathers."

Gibbon, in his Memoirs, asserts, that "*No learned man* can resist the force of the historical evidence, which establishes the fact, that, during the whole period of the first four ages of the church, the principal points of doctrine, believed by the Papists, were already admitted, *both in theory, and practice.*"

It is, indeed, on account of the exact resemblance of our present doctrines to those of the early Fathers, that the first reformers, as well as the generality of the Protestant writers, have treated the works, and the authority, of these venerable personages with so much scurrility and contempt.

lege against the posterior councils; and above all, against that which has censured you,—there is not one, which might not equally,—with the same consistency and truth,—be applied to those ancient assemblies, which you profess to admit. To reject any one of them, is to overturn them all. For, they, all, either stand, or else fall, together. Concerning the council of Chalcedon, the disciples of Eutyches, and Dioscorus, spoke, precisely as you do, of the council of Trent, Like you, those men contended, that their enemies domineered it over them; and that the purity of truth had been sacrificed to the influences of intrigue, and to the artifices of cabal. However, their reproaches, and declamations, were unavailing, and disregarded: and it is, even in your opinion, right, that they were so. In reality, would not disputes be endless, if, before any judgment should be looked upon as decisive, it were necessary to have the sanction of all the parties, that are interested in it? Again, if faith be incompatible with incertitude,—or even with the slenderest doubt,—then, either there must exist no tribunal to judge, and determine, the contests concerning the doctrines of religion; or else, this tribunal must be infallible. The consequence, therefore, must be, that you cannot, with any thing like consistency, affect to admit the authority even of one single ecumenical council, without equally admitting the infallibility of them all;—and by another necessary consequence, also, without declaring yourselves rebels, both to God and to his church."

"But if,—in order to avoid these perplexing inferences,—you should refuse to admit the infallibility of the ancient councils,—what benefit,"—we then ask you,—"in the case of such refusal, could you derive, or what advantage would you thus possess, over the Arians, or the Socinians? Would you, in this case, compel these men to submit, as a necessary obligation, to the dictate, and authority, of mere human determinations? But if so, would they not, in their turn, oppose to you your own principles and your own example?" For, "Where," they ask,—"where can there possibly be any obligation, or how can there exist any substantial motive, for subjecting our understandings, in matters of faith, to the understandings, and judgment, of a set of men, who, just like ourselves, are liable to error? Would not such submission imply manifestly the abandonment of our salvation to the risk of hazard? And would it not be believing, if not by the dictate of caprice, at all events without rule, certitude, or secure conviction?" —But, here you again reply, "that the first councils—although liable, indeed, to error—did not err. By the merciful effect of his divine power and wisdom, God permitted them to preserve in its original purity that sacred depositum of his doctrines, which he had communicated to mankind."

At this observation, the Socinian, the Arian, &c. again interfere; and taking up the question, remark: "The first councils," you say, "although liable to error, did not err. Now, this is precisely the very point which we contest. You presuppose, as a certain

fact, the very circumstance which we deny. As consistent Protestants, it is your place to prove clearly to us,—to convince us, by the authority of reason, and by the sanctions of the Scripture, that the doctrines, which we reject, are true. Then there will be no need of citing to us, or of alleging against us, the authority and decrees of councils. Or, if you cannot do this,—if you cannot establish the truth, and certainty, of your tenets, by the sanctions of the above attestations,—then it is, surely, still more unavailing to cite to us, by the way of convincing us, or else of shutting our mouths,—a set of councils, which, you allow, were liable to error." Such as this,—and it is but the dictate of common sense,—is the remonstrance, which the Socinian, the Arian, &c. present to those Protestant establishments, which, admitting the early, reject the posterior councils. Neither can any rational reply,—the leading maxims of the Reformation once admitted,—be made to refute it. For, supposing the early councils to have been fallible,—then, according to these maxims, it ought to appear necessary, precisely as in the case of all other doctrines, to discuss the tenets, which they have either defined, or handed down to us. In fact, not only this, but,—setting aside the sanctions of an infallible guide,—it should seem,—and indeed *is*,—necessary to follow up, and examine, through all the dark labyrinths of reasoning and argumentation, and at the risk, therefore, of being lost at every step,—to follow up, and examine, one after another, all the divine truths,

and doctrines of Christianity. *For, in matters of faith, all fallible authority is assentially null, and groundless.*

Accordingly, it is not the Socinians alone, but also many other sects of the Reformation, that,—founding their reasonings upon the maxims of Protestant theology,—complain very loudly of that intolerance, and inconsistency, which would compel them to admit doctrines which their judgment disapproves; and which even ties them by oaths, and tests, to profess tenets, which yet, they acknowledge, may not be true. All this, they very properly remark, is overturning the very foundation of the Reformation, and affording a triumph to the Catholic. For they too, like the Catholic, say,—"Either the ancient church was infallible, or it was not. If it was infallible, during certain centuries,—why, then, should we not deem it infallible still;—since there are exactly the same reasons for the continuation of the important prerogative, as there were for its alleged and supposed duration? In this case, it is in the decisions only, and in the sanctions, of the Catholic church, that men ought to seek for the true, and genuine doctrines of salvation. But, if the church, at the present day, is not infallible, then, also, it is true, that she never was so. And in this case, men always might,—and indeed, always *ought*,—ere they admitted, or believed her doctrines, to have first discussed, and examined them with care. It is, surely, too gross an illusion, too insolent a stretch of power, to pretend to oblige

us to give up our judgment, in calm submission, to a certain number of her decrees, whilst you assume the liberty of rejecting a multitude of others;—and of rejecting some, that are just equally clear, and as well established, as those which you would compel us to receive. What! have you then forsaken the Catholic church, only to intrude yourselves into her place? Have you accused her of tyranny, only to establish upon her ruins a tyranny, that is still more revolting, and far worse than hers? For, at all events, the Catholic church possesses in her own favour, a long, uninterrupted, and undisturbed possession. She, in exercising that authority, which you arrogate to yourselves, does not, like you, contradict and violate her own maxims. You admit certain councils, and reject others. Now, whence this preference? Whence such difference and distinction? By what means do you know,—by what criterion do you ascertain,—that, since many of the councils have, according to you, taught false doctrines, so those, also, which you admit, may not equally have done the same?—or, that these alone, have preserved faithfully the sacred truths of revelation? Have you any wise assurance of all this?—any other certitude of it, save the suggestions of your own feelings, or the dictates of your own judgment? Most certainly not. Therefore, the consequence is, that it is to your own weak, and fallible authority, that you wish, and seek, to subject us. However, do not deceive yourselves. After having taught us to deny, and reject, the autho-

rity, and alleged infallibility, of the pastors of every age, and of the whole body of the universal church itself,—after having done this, you, surely, cannot reasonably expect us to acknowledge, without some share of difficulty, the singular claim, or attribute, of your own inerrancy." Such as these are the reasonings, both of the Socinians, and many of the dissenting sects of the Reformation. They are such, that no Protestant defender of councils, or of oaths, and tests, and subscriptions, can make any consistent answer to them.*

* "Prejudices, and habit," says the learned Pastor of Geneva, Fernex, "may, no doubt, for a certain time, supply apologists for the use of confessions of faith. But it is impossible, that the time should not come, when men will own that they are essentially repugnant to the spirit of the Reformation. Already has the church, which was the first to admit the reformation in Switzerland,—the church of Zurich,—that church so eminent for its piety and wisdom,—suffered them to fall into disuse. Already have several other Protestant cantons thrown off the same yoke. Already, in many of the churches of Germany, do the Protestants consider creeds, as so many formulas, devoid of any consequence; which they are careless about observing: and which, if they do still retain, they retain merely as the remnants of habit. Already, in France, have they left off even presenting them to the pastors. It is, therefore, I repeat it, impossible, that men should not, ere long, acknowledge the necessity of restoring to all Christians, that liberty of examination, and that freedom of conscience, which belong to them; and the incontestable right, above all, of regulating their belief by the word, and directions, of the Bible."

"Articles of churches," says Bishop Watson, "are not of divine authority. Have done with them. They may be true: they may be false."

XVII. Seldom indeed,—or perhaps, never,—do the torrents of error, or the tide of opinions, flow back to their ancient sources. Thus, it was in vain, that some of the Reformers, and a certain portion of the reformed theologians, attempted to stay the violence of the tempest; and to check that conflict and confusion of beliefs, which the Reformation had every where produced, among its own vic-

"When it is considered," says Mackenzie, in his Life of Calvin, "that the right of private judgment was the leading principle, implied, and acted upon, in the Reformation, it is scarcely possible to read the repeated instances of intolerance, without regretting the inconsistency of the Protestant churches. No privilege appears to have been more variously contested than the right of private judgment,—a privilege, founded in the nature, and responsible circumstances, of man; and recognised by the impartial spirit, and high authority of Christianity. To say, that the reformers possessed this right, and were justified in employing it in the establishment of the reformation, and that their brethren are not entitled to the same privilege, is an assumption, which no friend to religious liberty can allow. If the right of private judgment be allowed in one instance, it must be admitted *in all:* since the New Testament knows of no limitation, or exception; but considers every man as exclusively responsible to God; and rests the right of private judgment upon that responsibility. The denial of the exercise of this rational and Christian right, seconded by influence, sufficient to prevent it, would necessarily have the effect of throwing us back into the darkness, and barbarity of the middle ages. The reformation would have been impossible."

I believe, in fact, that it is the case, that creeds are, in every Protestant church, nearly a dead letter; and that, if their ministers are still compelled to subscribe them, it is, as Gibbon says, "*either with a sigh, or a smile.*"

tims and disciples. Its abettors, with very general consent, had early been reduced to proclaim this grand, and important principle,—"That the Bible alone, independent and exclusive of any visible authority, is the sole rule and depositum of the Christian's faith." "To know," says Chillingworth, the religion of Protestants, you must neither consult the doctrine of Luther, nor that of Calvin, or Melancthon; nor the Confession of Augsburg, nor Geneva; nor the Catechism of Heidelberg; nor the Articles of the Church of England; nor yet, the Harmony of all the Protestant churches; but *that*, which they all subscribe to, as the perfect rule of their faith and action,—that is to say, *the Bible. Yes, the Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants.*

Such was the Reformation; and such the general state of Protestantism, at no great length of interval after the epoch of its introduction. Its members,—that is, the chief portion of its more reasoning partisans,—ashamed of its everlasting variations, and tired out with wandering perpetually from creed to creed,—thought proper now, with improved courage and consistency, to disavow at once both the authority of the first Reformers, and the wisdom of their confessions. "It is not," they now said, "by reading our countless creeds and professions of faith,—not by confiding in the opinions of our Luthers, Calvins, and Melancthons, that you will learn our belief. We care little or nothing about creeds, and confessions; and we now laugh

at the errors of our first apostles. *The Bible, the Bible only, is the religion of the Protestant.*"

However, as I have before remarked,—there presents itself here a very serious difficulty. The Bible is always silent; and often extremely obscure. It does not explain itself. The question, therefore, is—Who shall explain it? This, too, is a question, which I have answered repeatedly. Why,—according to the above maxims,—*all, without exception*, should explain it. For, as all, without exception, are called to the knowledge of the truth,—and truth, it is contended, is no where to be found but in the Bible,—so, of course, it must be the bounden duty of *all* to seek, and to find, the sacred treasure there. This, indeed, is so plain a consequence, that no consistent Protestant will pretend even to contest it. Well, and yet it is true, that it is this,—this very concession,—that involves the Protestant in perplexities so inextricable, and in contradictions so preposterous, that one blushes almost for the honour of human reason. It was, I have shown, in order to account for the method, by which men might, *all of them*, explain the Bible, and discover, in its divine pages, the true doctrines of salvation, that the reformers, and the reformed theologians, invented so many strange and extravagant devices,—in the first place, that of *private inspiration;* next, that of *sentiment, and taste, &c.*—contending, that, just as by the feelings, and taste, men distinguish heat and cold, sweet and bitter;—just so, and by a similar kind of mental impulse, do they discover in the sa-

cred volume the true doctrines of salvation. However, ashamed again, ere long, of these and such like sensitive systems, they now, as their best resource, concluded, that the real arbiter of Christian faith,—the tribunal, which alone and exclusively possesses the right of interpreting the Bible,—is, the good sense, or judgment, of each private individual.*

* The circumstance is curious, and presents a strange piece of incoherency. By the fundamental rule of Protestantism, every individual possesses the right of private judgment, and is allowed, of course, to interpret the Bible, as his reason, or his feelings, prompt him:—and yet, (mark, reader, the contradiction!) he is not allowed to interpret the thirty-nine articles. In the declaration prefixed to this singular code, it is said, "His Majesty prohibits his loving subjects the least difference from them, or putting their own sense upon them; but requires them to be taken in their literal, and grammatical sense." "The thirty-nine articles," says Dr. Tomline, "are to be subscribed, in their plain, and obvious sense; and assent given to them, simply and unequivocally: else, the subscriber incurs the wrath of God." In all this there may be some degree of political wisdom; but, it is, surely, a piece of very gross religious inconsistency. For, if men are permitted to explain the Scriptures, why not then the fallible doctrines, or decrees, of a few fallible Protestant ministers? Such restriction is tolerable, only under a system of infallibility. But then, to require moreover, that men should take the above articles, in their "literal and grammatical sense; whereas, they have, many of them, no literal and grammatical sense,—to insist, that they shall be subscribed, even under the penalty of "incurring the wrath of God," in their "plain and obvious" signification,—whereas, no human capacity can understand them;—nay, to oblige men, still farther, to *swear*, that they believe them;—if all this be not the violation, both of the real principles of

All this is repetition; but repetition is sometimes necessary. And hence, although I have already stated some of the consequences of the alleged pretension, yet, again resuming the subject, I will point out a few more of its awkward difficulties.

XVIII. The religion, then, of the consistent Protestant is thus, according to the above-cited principle, transformed into a system of reasoning. And the consequence, as I have so often stated, was,—and still is,—that it early assumed, and possesses at present, as many forms, and features, as there are fancies, and feelings, in the human mind. Sects at once arose; and each sect soon generated others,—succeeding, and following, one another with restless and rapid velocity,—like cloud pursuing cloud, or wave rushing upon wave. Never did the Christian world, at any period, behold so astonishing, and so wild a fecundity of errors,—a profusion of creeds contradicting creeds, and of doctrines opposed to doctrines; but yet all, and every one of them, deduced plainly, according to their respective authors, from the word of God. To pretend to state, or even to enumerate them, would be absurd;—more absurd than to attempt, on a day of tem-

Protestantism, and of decency itself, let wisdom say, what is. "The thirty-nine articles," says Dr. Paley, "would be found, on dissection, to contain about two hundred and forty distinct, and independent propositions; and many of them inconsistent with each other." "The thirty-nine articles," adds Dr. Balgui, "impose upon us doctrines of dark and ignorant ages." And yet, men *swear*, that they believe them!

pest, or in the midst of a storm, to count up the clouds which obscure the sun.

XIX. The whole history of Protestantism is replete with inconsistencies. Thus, notwithstanding all the wide liberty of its maxims, and the freedom with which its members are allowed to apply them, —such, notwithstanding these circumstances, is the attachment, which men entertain for their own belief,—or at least, such was the affection, which the reformers, some of them, entertained for their own opinions,—united, it may have been, with a certain remaining, but expiring respect for unity,—that, although indignant at the condemnation which had been passed upon them by the church of Rome,—they proceeded, very early, to condemn, and even anathematise, each other. Thus, we know, with what severity the arch apostle, Luther, reprobated many of the doctrines of his fellow apostle, Calvin, —whilst the latter, in like manner, with an equal degree of aversion, expressed his dislike to several of those of Luther.* Again, how strikingly do the

* It would be a very difficult task to show, why these two great leaders should thus mutually reprove each other; or what there is, in relation to their respective doctrines, that is the most deserving of condemnation. Luther, by denying free will, and declaring good works injurious to salvation, destroyed at once the whole system of moral virtue. Calvin, in the same way, by the doctrine of inamissable grace, did radically, and really, the self-same thing. For, according to the dogma, as explained by the heresiarch, provided that a man be once justified, he is, consequently, justified for ever: so that, although he continue to commit the most flagitious crimes,

punishments, which Calvin inflicted upon the unfortunate Servetus, evince the abhorrence, which he entertained for the tenets of the Unitarians! But, in fact, not only was such as this the conduct of those two great authors of the Reformation; it was, moreover, the general, and almost uniform case with their disciples, whenever, by the seductions of eloquence, the cant of piety, or the violence of declamation, they had contrived to draw after them a certain number of adherents, and obtained sufficient influence to institute a sect. On these occasions, they all, and each, reciprocally censur-

they are still no impediments to his salvation. Thus, they arrive, each of them, at the self-same point; that is, they, both of them, equally annihilate every obligation of morality, and of religious duties; contending, as they both do, that *faith alone* is the principle of future happiness, and the sole precept of Christian piety. It is true, they had not the boldness to declare, that faith delivers the believer from the obligation of obeying the civil laws,—although, indeed, their maxims do, certainly, extend even to these. However, the successors of these apostles,—and not an inconsiderable number of them,—like good logicians, and consistent reasoners, proceeded even thus far. Whence, one of their leading tenets was, to acknowledge no superior, either in religion, or in the order of politics;—or at least, no superior save the Great Being, who has redeemed us, the Saviour Jesus Christ;—maxims these, which, it is greatly to be apprehended, will not long, in the present unhappy times, remain fruitless, and without effect. Whensoever, by the frightful permission of God's justice, hell prepares a heavy calamity for the punishment of mankind, its first step, most frequently, is to suggest some *error* or other; to scatter it in the walks of life; and then leave it to the operation of time to ripen and complete it.

ed, and condemned each other. But, above all, such as this was uniformly their conduct, whenever supported by the state, and encouraged by the policy of the civil government, they had the good fortune to organise, and create, any great, or considerable establishment. Then, indeed, as if feeling the necessity of union,—or as if they were seriously alarmed at the dissolution of the truths of religion, which, under the operation of their own fundamental principles, they saw gradually melting away, and disappearing,—*then*, in imitation of the Catholic church, not only did they loudly reprobate all innovators, and condemn disunion, but they thought proper to bring back and interpose, the still stronger checks of power, and the instruments of authority. They had recourse to oaths, tests, subscriptions, punishments, excommunications, &c. Fruitless and unavailing artifices! which, sapping the very foundations of the Reformation, served only to point out the despair, and inconsistency, of the churches which adopted them. They were mere bulrushes, cast into the ocean to allay a storm. Men laughed at the flimsy attempt; derided the inconsistency of its authors; and set at naught, both the decrees of their synods, and the terrors of their excommunications. They went on, still reasoning, and dogmatising; and sects, and errors, and incredulity, continued to increase, precisely as they had done before.

XX. The voice of authority thus neglected,—recourse was now had to the expedient of *conciliation.* But, even this was attended with very little better success than the preceding. It produced, indeed, a few apparent unions; or rather, a few partial treaties of mutual toleration. But, the effects of these proved, altogether, more injurious, than beneficial, to the cause of truth. For, although they were undertaken upon the pretext of charity, and for the sake of peace,—yet, jumbling together all kinds of creeds, and systems, they, consequently, served only to teach, and accustom, the public to look upon the circumstance of *doctrines* as an object of indifference. Such negociations do, indeed, form, in the minds of the really enlightened, a just subject of public scandal. They are spectacles, such as had never before been seen, or heard of, in the annals of the Christian church. In them, we behold a set of religious negociators, pretending to establish peace by the mutual concession, and abandonment of dogmas;—giving up reciprocally, on each side, certain articles, and portions, of their faith, in the same way precisely as, after a ruinous war, a set of negociators, or princes, surrender to each other certain towns or territories;—and stipulating, at the same time, for certain civil, and profane indemnities, in room of the truths, or opinions, which they have thus deserted, and renounced.*

* Speaking of the reconciliation, which has recently taken place amongst the Protestant sects in Germany, Mr. Jacob re-

XXI. Witnesses, therefore, of all these evils,—of all this instability and fluctuation,—the Catholics, who had long before foreseen and predicted

marks as follows: "That union is said to have spread still wider a spirit of indifference upon sacred subjects. The distinguishing tenet of the Lutherans, and that which is contained in their symbolic books, to which the clergy profess adherence, is the doctrine of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the bread and wine, in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This tenet, though it has been ever the profession of the Lutheran church, has been long abandoned by almost the whole of its ministers. The reformed, or Calvinistic ministers, had, like their brethren of the Lutheran party, little to give up. Their distinguishing tenets of predestination, election, perseverance, and impelling grace, were passed over in their public services, as obsolete dogmas, never to be introduced: and it was generally understood, that, for a century past, they have been scarcely entertained by any considerable number of the clergy. So that the union, that has been effected, is not imagined to have had any other practical effect, but that of making the common people think religious worship, under any form, as much a matter of indifference, as this union, thus easily effected, shows, that different opinions are to their teachers." He adds, that—"The church of Rome has, in consequence, rceived into her bosom several members from the Protestant religion, who are distinguished for their virtue, their talents, and their learning."

"Men," says the British Critic, "may be brought to coalesce, and their religious animosities may be calmed. But, with them will perish their religion also. They will unite, because, bewildered and fatigued by their mutual contentions, they have taught each other to despise the very object of their dispute, or to give up the pursuit of it in despair. From such a downfall there is no recovery. It may, we fear, be regarded as the forerunner of that final state of apostacy, when faith will scarcely be found upon the earth."

them,—now summoned the Protestant theologians to declare, where, or when, it was, that they proposed to stop. They called upon them to point out, where, amidst all this confusion of conflicting, and contradictory professions of their belief, it was possible to discover that striking characteristic of the true religion, which St. Paul declares is so essential to it,—"*the unity of faith.*" "The religion of Jesus Christ,"—observed the Catholics to them, —"reposing upon revelation,—and revelation being always, and necessarily, unchangeable,—the consequence must be, that, whensoever the doctrines of any church, or sect, are found to vary, such church, or sect, cannot, of course, be considered as the real religion of this holy Legislator." This is an argument, which Bossuet, in his History of the Protestant Variations, has developed with that force of reasoning, which is peculiarly the characteristic of that immortal writer. Struck, indeed, with the astonishing production, and unable to make any reasonable reply to it, the Protestants remained silent;—or rather, they honestly acknowledged the variations imputed to them.

It is hence, and after having contemplated that general indifference, which now pervades the Protestant mind in relation to the dogmas of religion, that an elegant French writer very justly remarks,—"Protestantism is, at present, little else than a mere sepulchral monument;—a tomb, which, as yet, a few men mistake for a living object, only because it is still adorned with certain images of life, and with a few emblems of immortality."

They even appeared to wonder, that they had not varied more than they had done. So sensibly did they feel for their own instability, and for the obvious tendency of their own leading principles.

XXII. After an acknowledgment like the above, and it is what every well-informed,—if candid—Protestant will equally make,—there remains only one form of defence, which the reformed churches can, with any kind of semblance of reasonableness, pretend to allege in their own support. It is this; —To maintain, that the doctrines, upon which they have varied so much, and contradicted each other so very widely, are not, in themselves, *essential* doctrines; and that, therefore, men may admit, or reject them, without any violation of Christianity, or without any risk, or sacrifice, of their salvation. It was thus, that was first begotten, and introduced, that favourite, and now general, system of *fundamentals;*—a system, which reduces the necessity, and obligation, of faith to a certain, but small number of articles; and considers all the rest,—or at least tolerates all the rest,—as immaterial; or as objects, at all events, of very inferior, if not trifling consequence.

It is true, indeed, that the adoption of this unfortunate device is the necessary result, both of the character of the Protestant principles, and of the situation, and state, of Protestant societies. The abettors of the Protestant cause were compelled—(they had no other resource)—to come forward in its defence, from the nature of the controversy,

which they had to maintain with the Catholics, concerning the divine authority of the Christian church. The expedient, however, although unavoidable, is desperate. It forms, again, a system, replete with absurdities; and even repugnant to the very maxims themselves of the Reformation;—a system even, which cannot possibly be true, unless Christianity itself be false. Its real, and direct effect, is the toleration, not only of every species of religious error, but of Socinianism, Deism, and in fact of every form of infidelity.

XXIII. The system of *fundamentals* is in the first place incompatible with the very principles themselves of the Reformation. As a proof of this, I appeal, in the first instance, to the rule itself of the Protestant's belief,—that rule, as I have so often stated, which the Protestant professes to follow, as the guide, and foundation, of his faith,—the *Bible.* The case, most certainly, is,—that, ere the Protestant adopt the alleged expedient, he ought, of course, to have proved, that the sacred volume does indeed contain it,—that is, that the sacred volume does really point, and establish, the distinction between fundamental and unfundamental doctrines;—specifying, moreover, at the same time, which are the fundamental, which are not the fundamental articles. These inferences are obvious; whilst, also, they are the immediate dictate of the maxims of Protestant theology. Well, and yet, what is the fact? Why, that, although the defenders of the system have been incessantly urged to make out, and establish,

these important points, yet have they never, with all their labour and ingenuity, been, as yet, able to do so. Not even have they produced so much as one single text, which, in its true and natural signification, favoured,—I will not say, directly, but even indirectly,—the preposterous notion. On the contrary, the Scripture is full of passages, which condemn it. Thus, when Christ sends his apostles, to announce his divine gospel to mankind, does he say, for example, to them, "Go; and teach men to distinguish carefully those doctrines of mine which are fundamental, and those which are not such? Teach them not to confound those articles, which they are absolutely bound to believe, with those which they may safely, and without any risk of their salvation, either deny, or disregard?" Is this, or such as this, the language of Christ to his apostles? No; he tells them nothing of the kind. But, what, then, does he say to them? Why; he says,—"Go, and teach all nations; teaching them to observe *all things*, whatsoever I have commanded you,"—*all things, without any exception*:—or, as another of the evangelists expresses it,—"Go into the whole world: preach the gospel to every creature. Whosoever shall believe shall be saved; but whosoever believeth not, shall be damned." From these passages it ought manifestly to seem to follow, that it is the duty of mankind to believe, at all events, *implicitly*, all the divine truths of revelation; since the gospel, or the word of Jesus Christ, comprises them *all without exception*. Men must, therefore, accor-

ding to the above awful declaration, either believe them, or be condemned. Now, a system of faith, which is repugnant to the testimony of the Scripture,—or which even is not clearly contained in the Scripture, is incompatible with that grand principle of Protestantism, which declares, that the sole rule of the Christian's faith is the authority of the *Bible*. So that, thus, the direct inference is, that the Protestant cannot, without contradicting himself, and violating his own favourite maxim, adopt the system of fundamentals.

In the next place, it is most certain, that the disciples of Christ, the faithful executors of his will, and commands, never permitted,—never suffered, without the severest censure,—any, even the slightest inroad, to be made upon the doctrines of his divine religion. St. Paul declares, that faith, just like the Divinity itself, is "One." And he, for this reason, pronounces anathema upon whosoever shall presume "to teach a different doctrine from himself." He commands the faithful "to avoid the heretical man;"—assuring them, that sects, and heresies, are amongst those various crimes, which exclude men from the kingdom of heaven. Such, too, is the sentence, pronounced by St. Peter, in the second of his Epistles;—whilst, in like manner, St. John proclaims, that "whosoever abideth not in the doctrines of Christ, is not of God,"—or, as the Protestant version expresses it, "hath not God," Such are the maxims of the apostles;—such the spirit of toleration, inculcated by these holy persona-

ges. I can only say this,—that, if the system of fundamentals is true, then are their maxims false.

In the third place, I will remark, what is a certain and incontestable fact,—that never until the epoch of the Reformation, was there known, or even so much as ever suggested, so singular a distinction, as that of fundamental and unfundamental articles of Christian faith. Such opinion was unknown to all the fathers, and to all the councils. It was unknown to every class of the Christian public;—not to the Catholics only, but even to every sect of heresy. The general, or rather, the unanimous sentiment of the whole Christian universe, until the above-stated period, was,—that there exists *only one faith*, by which salvation may be attained; and *only one church*, in which *this one faith* is professed.

Wherefore, I now leave it to the Protestant to ask himself the question, and to examine with serious care, upon what grounds, or pretence, it is, that he reconciles it to his feelings to live on, calmly secure, under the direction of a system, which is thus so manifestly repugnant to every dictate of Christian wisdom. His sanction, as I have shown, is not, certainly, the authority of the Bible, nor the testimony of antiquity. Neither is it,—I will also proceed to show,—the suggestion of reason itself.

XXIV. When the Protestants, and the defenders of fundamentals, undertake to reason with the Socinian, the Deist, &c. and attempt to convince them of the necessity of revelation, the method, which they adopt is the following:—Grounding their demon-

strations upon the concessions themselves of those unbelievers, they prove, from these premises, in the first place, that religion is necessary; and that, therefore, there exists a religion. Next, holding in their hands the annals of human philosophy, they show, that it is not possible, by the mere light of human reason, to attain a perfect and complete understanding of any one mystery whatsoever;—that where men have had, or have, no other guide but the suggestions of their own understandings, they have always been the victims and dupes of error;—that, thus unassisted, they will, for ever, wander from doubt to doubt; from incertitude to incertitude;—and that, so far from attaining any fixed convictions, they must ere long,—provided that they continue to reason on consistently,—feel themselves under the necessity of tolerating the denial of all religious dogmas, the exclusion of all worship, and even the destruction of all morals,—that is, in reality, the toleration of atheism itself. Such is the reasoning of the enlightened Protestant. Whence, also, he infers, that, if religion,—a true religion,—be necessary, then likewise is it necessary, that God himself should reveal it to us.*

* "There is no medium," says the writers of the British Review, "between a full acceptation of the truths of the gospel, on the one hand, and downright infidelity,—by which we mean downright atheism,—on the other. Wherever we may be between these two extreme points,—whether Arians, Pelagians, Socinians, Deists, or freethinkers,—to one, or the other, we are, most certainly, tending. There may be spots in this wide, and desert interval, where we may continue awhile. But there

Wherefore, behold the awful difficulties, which these men,—that is, the defenders of fundamentals, —are compelled to admit: God reveals certain truths to his creatures, and yet, according to the alleged system, men are at liberty not to believe them: they have the privilege to reject doctrines, which the Eternal Wisdom has thought proper to impart to them for the aid, and security, of their salvation. But if so, where, then, is the use of the benefit of revelation? If men are really at liberty to deny, or to reform, the instructions of the Almighty, would it not be just as well, or rather better, that he should, at once, have continued silent? However, such precisely as this is the liberty, which the advocates of fundamentals are under the necessity of defending; and which also they profanely arrogate to themselves.

"But," they reply,—"surely all the doctrines of revelation are not necessary for man's salvation." "Well; but how then,"—I would say to these men,

is no fixed abode; no place where we can settle. Either we shall go on from faith to faith, or else we shall go on from declivity to declivity; constantly abandoning one part of Scripture after another; and gradually tending to the land of darkness, and of the shadow of death."

These observations are wise; and the truth of them is very strikingly exemplified in all the churches, or associations, of Protestantism, where we behold men, daily, "going on from faith to faith, and from declivity to declivity." The progress is, in fact, both natural and necessary. For, in Protestantism, there is "no fixed abode;" "no place," where the *reasoner* can "settle," nor yet, quietly,—*if prudently*,—repose.

—"how do you know, and by what means can you be reasonably assured, that God has indeed revealed truths, which are not necessary? Such gratuitous hypothesis is, certainly, repugnant to the notions of the divine wisdom, and overturns the very principle by which yourselves establish the necessity of the order itself of revelation. And neither is this all: for, to the feelings, not only of piety, but of reason, it appears even more preposterous to assert, that men may deny without danger, or reject with impunity, certain parts of revelation, than it is to maintain, that there exists no revelation at all."

If, then, a comparison were instituted between the system of the fundamentalists and that of the Socinians, I should say, that the opinion of these unbelievers,—profane and dreadful as they are,—are yet, after all, more consistent, more rational, and less insulting to the Divinity itself, than are the sentiments of the former. For, there is something less revolting in the idea of rejecting revelation, because men believe that God has *not spoken* to them, than there is in the insolence of rejecting, as the defenders of fundamentals do,—certain portions or doctrines of it, which, at the same time, they own, have been delivered to us by the Eternal Wisdom. The Socinians, or even Deists, persuading themselves, that religion reposes upon a basis, which is purely rational, or human, admit and respect it, upon this account, only just so far, and accordingly as it agrees with the dictates of their judgment, or the suggestions of their feelings; whereas, the ad-

vocates of fundamentals, acknowledging that the doctrines of Christianity are founded, all of them, upon the authority of the divine word,—still boldly contest,—or rather positively deny ,—the obligation of always, and in relation to all points, subjecting their belief to the authority of this tribunal. They assume to themselves the right of preferring, in certain points and cases, their own private reason before the reason, and wisdom, of the Almighty. In short, the Socinian, and the Deist, feeling in themselves the insufficiency of their own talents to establish firmly the truth and certitude of any dogma whatsoever, are hence unwilling, and for this reason refuse, to make the prospects of future happiness, and the securities of salvation, dependent upon the belief of any dogma whatsoever; whilst, according to the principles of fundamentalists, the belief of certain revealed dogmas,—but only of certain dogmas,—is of the most imperious and indispensable necessity. And yet, what is the case amongst these said believers? Why, that with all their ingenuity, they have, never as yet, been able to define, and determine which, or what, these important and essential dogmas are. There is even no point, on which they disagree more widely. So that the consequence is, that, amongst all the immense multitude of these men, there is not so much as one single individual, who is, or can be, wisely and satisfactorily assured, that he believes precisely those articles of revelation, which are required for the security of his salvation. This, surely,—supposing the necessity of

the belief in revelation,—is a state of incertitude, which, to the feelings of Christian piety, ought to appear distressing.

Such as these are a few of the many alarming consequences, which result from subjecting the doctrines of religion to the feeble and selfish tribunal of human reason. Men know not, thus, what it is that they may surrender without danger, or with security retain. They possess no principle, whereby they can make the useful, but profane distinction. I say, *profane*; because to imagine, that God has spoken in vain,—that he has revealed a set of superfluous doctrines,—what is this but an insult to his wisdom, and the condemnation of his impenetrable councils?

Moreover, (for this is another circumstance which deserves attention) is it not true, that all the various doctrines of the Christian code are linked,—even very intimately linked,—together? Such, no doubt, is the fact. But, if so,—then, where every thing is united, every thing, also, should seem,—and *is* of course,—essential. The great aim and object, of religion, is to point out to mankind their proper station in the order of created beings; and at the same time, to support and maintain them in it, by means of the two great laws of *truth* and *justice*, of which, dogmas and precepts are the natural and direct expression. And how, therefore, in an order of laws like these, can there possibly be any thing, that is, or that can reasonably appear, indifferent? Upon what pretext, or plea, can the violation, or rejection, of the laws of truth appear less improper than the

infraction, or the neglect, of the rules of justice? The source of each is the same: and to separate, is to destroy them. For, justice, in reality, is but truth, rendered sensible by action,—according to that saying of St. John,—"He that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest that they come from God." Whence, the consequence is, that God can no more permit error, than he can tolerate crime. And, the fact is, that the toleration of crime is the necessary effect of the doctrines, which consecrate, or allow, the toleration of error. This, however, is a proposition, which I shall not proceed to illustrate, until I have made one or two farther observations upon the *inconsistencies* into which the defenders of fundamental articles are reduced to fall.

XXV. To admit revelation is to believe the divine truths of religion upon the authority of the Almighty, who has disclosed them to us. Wherefore, since this authority is every where alike, and the same,—so, consequently, alike also, and just equal, must be the obligation of believing them. To reject, or deny any one of them, is, in reality, to reject, or deny, the authority upon which alone they, *all* of them, repose. It is overturning the very foundation of revelation; and resigning it, undefended, and defenceless, to the Socinian, and the Deist.

But, in order the better to feel the connexion, which subsists between the doctrine of these unbelievers, and that of the advocates of fundamentals, I will take a hasty review of this system, exactly as

we examine the religion of *nature*,—under the threefold heads of dogmas, worship, and morality. The identity of its principles with those of the forementioned latitudinarians, will appear from the identity of their respective conclusions.

According to the doctrine of the fundamentalists, there are certain dogmas, which men may disbelieve, or deny, without the sacrifice, or risk, of their future happiness ;—whilst at the same time there are others, which it is absolutely necessary for them to believe. This admitted,—the first thing, of course, which, both in duty and consistency, these men should seem bound to do, is to lay down some clear, exact, and certain rule, by means of which the mind may be enabled to judge with accuracy, and to decide with security, which are really the fundamental doctrines of revelation, and which are not. Such, certainly, as this, is the first suggestion of Christian prudence on a subject of so much moment. For, salvation, to an immense multitude of individuals, must depend upon the wise solution of it.

That the fundamental doctrines of salvation are really contained in the Bible,—this, no doubt, is true. But, then, as I have said already, it is likewise at the same time true, that, no where, does the sacred volume point out, or specify, which, amongst the doctrines which it contains, are to be deemed fundamental, and which are not. Neither does it any where lay down one single rule, by which the important distinction may be ascertained. And what, therefore, is again the consequence ? Why,

the Scriptures being silent upon the subject,—it became, for this reason, necessary for the Protestants to create, and establish, certain arbitrary rules of their own. They are, thus, the masters of their own belief;—since they are, thus, the masters of the rules, which they have themselves invented, in order to determine it.

Among the various rules, suggested for the momentous purpose, there are only three, which deserve attention; and these, indeed, I have discussed already; although applying them to cases somewhat different from the present. The first of these alleged criterions is sentiment, or feeling. "Men feel the truth," say some of the advocates of the system, "exactly as they feel the light, when they behold it; warmth, when they approach the fire; or sweetness, when they eat." Thus have reasoned, and still reason,—a certain number of these men.—Well, and such, also, as this, is the frequent reasoning of the Deist. "My guide," he says, "and the criterion of my belief, are my feelings. I feel the Godhead in all his works. I feel him every where around me, and within me. Therefore, I believe and worship him. In like manner, I feel my soul: and it is by my feelings, that I know, and acknowledge, its existence." Thus, the rule of judging is, in both of these reasoners, the same. The difference is, that, conducted by it, the Deist feels nothing but the religion of *nature*; whilst the Protestant, under its impulse, feels, still farther, the religion of *revelation*. Thus, too, it is, and by this

pernicious method, that the sectarists of almost every description, reconcile themselves to their respective errors. The Arminian *does not feel* the necessity of grace, therefore, he rejects it. The Calvinist *does not feel*,—whilst the Lutheran *does feel*,—the real presence; therefore, the former denies, whilst the latter defends, the sacred institution. The Socinian *does not feel* the Divinity of Jesus Christ; as the Unitarian *does not feel* the existence of the Trinity; whence, they, each of them, disbelieve the important mysteries. Thus, by adopting a false rule of judging, men deduce false, and the most awfully wrong, conclusions. However, let me here, for the honour of Christian wisdom, remark,—that, finding the injurious consequences, which result from the adoption of *feelings*, as the criterion of belief,—the more moderate, and well-instructed Protestants now condemn it, as a piece of extravagance, a source of fanatacism, and a principle of incredulity.

The next resource,—and this was long a favourite expedient amongst many not unlearned defenders of the system,—is this: to consider those articles alone as fundamental, which are connected immediately with the foundation itself of Christianity. This opinion has indeed a multitude of advocates. However, unfortunately for the device, it so chances, that, never, as yet, have, either its authors or defenders, been able to decide, or agree amongst themselves, what those articles are, which constitute precisely the foundation of Christianity. So

that, thus, the rule becomes nugatory, and of no avail. Who, in fact, can pretend to judge of the connexion between any given dogma, which is known, with another, which is unknown? Or, what, again, ought reasonably to be considered as the foundation of the Christian institute, if it be not certain truths, or articles of faith, which mankind, in order to be members of the church of Christ, are under the strict obligation of believing? So that, in reality, the foundation of Christianity, and fundamental truths, are but one and the same thing. Whence, the alleged rule may be reduced to the following aphorism: "We know the foundation, by its connexion with the foundation."

The above explanations therefore not appearing satisfactory, nor of any material benefit to the Protestant cause, another portion of its theologians suggested a third, in the following terms:—"That," they say, "is fundamental, and necessary for the security of salvation, which the Christian public have, every where and unanimously believed. And this rule," they again add, "is, of all others, the safest." This rule, of all others, "the safest!"—But if so, then also it is true, that the safest is, to believe nothing at all;—or at least, to believe nothing, except just what each one pleases. For since there is not so much as one single dogma, which has not been denied by one heretic or other, so the consequence would be, that there do not exist any fundamental truths whatsoever; and that it is needless to undertake to ascertain them. However, be

this as it may, the following inference is, at all events, certain,—that the alleged rule is clearly repugnant to the leading rule of Protestantism, which admits of no human authority in the determination of the articles of belief. For, the consent of men, however it be understood, forms, according to the opinion of every consistent Protestant, only a human authority, and as such, exposed to error; and therefore, for this reason, insufficient to fix, and to decide with certitude, what in the Christian religion is really fundamental, and what is not. It is thus a principle, too weak and fluctuating, to form the basis of Christian faith.

XXVI. I have stated the above methods of explaining the supposed fundamental articles, not so much with the view of refuting them, as from the design of pointing out the difficulties, to which the defenders of Protestantism are incessantly reduced. In fact, the above methods,—although they may still have, each of them, a certain number of admirers,—are not those, after all, which, at the present day, are the most usually adopted. There is a portion of natural rectitude in the human mind, even when it is the dupe of error, which sometimes compels it, in its very aberrations, to wander with a certain degree of consistency and care. It is so in the present case. For, finding that the rules, which I have been citing, are replete with inextricable difficulties and contradictions, the more enlightened theologians of the Protestant communions have adopted, very generally, different ones;—a set of

rules, indeed, which are founded upon the basis itself of the Reformation. The three following are the principal ones:

First,—"That the only sure guide, and foundation of the Christian's faith is the authority of the Bible, interpreted by the best dictates of his own understanding;"—a maxim this, which constitutes the real grounds of Protestantism, and which no Protestant, if consistent, can reject, without ceasing to be a Protestant.

The second,—"That the sense of the Bible, in order to create an obligation of belief, ought necessarily to be clear." This, too, is a rule, which is but consonant to the former, and to the suggestions of common sense. For, without this,—without a certain degree of clearness,—men would believe, without knowing what they believe, which would be an absurdity; or else, without being prudently assured, that the Bible does really so direct, and oblige them to believe, which, again, would be unreasonable.

The third,—"That where the Bible appears to teach what is unintelligible, and beyond the reach of the human understanding, it is then proper to interpret it in that sense, which is the most consonant to the dictates of reason." This regulation, too, is in reality, but the natural consequence, and development of the two preceding ones. Because, if reason be the interpreter of the sacred pages, it cannot, of course, be supposed to interpret them in a sense, which is contrary to the suggestions of its own light

and apprehensions; attributing to them a signification, offensive to the understanding; and from which the mind recoils dissatisfied, and unconvinced. In short, this is the fact,—that the interpretations of reason ought to be conformable to reason. For if, according to the second rule, they were at once *clear*, and at the time, by supposition, *unreasonable*,—the consequence would then be, that the mind would be under the obligation of believing *a clear absurdity*.

The leading principle of Protestantism being once admitted,—it, of course, becomes necessary,—or at all events, a piece of consistency,—to admit those rules, which are founded directly upon it;—and which also its defenders have, most generally, adopted, and observed. However, who is there, that, in this case, does not see, that the authority of the Bible is, thus, after all, neither more nor less than the mere authority of human reason? So that, in fact, all the rules, which I have thus far stated, might be compressed into this one,—"That men should, each, believe what they please; or what their own reason points out as true." Behold then, here is the very rule, and maxim, of the Socinian, and the Deist: I might, indeed, add, still farther,—and of the Atheist too.*

* The French Encyclopedists, D'Alembert, Diderot, &c. tracing the progress of error, as created and conducted by the rule of Protestantism, consider its last step as terminating in downright atheism. "The Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman church," they say, "is incontestably the only sure one. . . But this religion, at the same time, requires from those who embrace it,

XXVII. At a certain period, and even for some length of time, the Protestant churches in general refused to admit the Socinians into the class of those societies which had retained, what they called, "the foundations of Christianity." In reply to this awful anathema, the Socinians, indignant at the circumstance, came forward, and boldly asked the members of these associations, upon what pretence, or by what authority, it was, that they excluded from the prospects of salvation a set of men, who, just equally with themselves, admitted, and revered, the sacred scriptures? "With what right," they said to them,—"do you prefer your reason to ours; and affect to decide, what the Scriptures themselves do not,—pretending to determine,—as you do,—which are those precise dogmas, which it is necessa-

the most entire submission of their reason. When, therefore, there is found in this communion a man of a restless and uneasy spirit, and difficult to satisfy, he begins, ere long, to set himself up as the judge of the truth of the dogmas, which are proposed to him to be believed. And as he does not find in these objects of faith a degree of evidence which their nature does not admit of, he now makes himself a Protestant. But, soon discovering the incoherency of the principles which characterise Protestantism, he seeks in Socinianism for a solution of his doubts and perplexities; and he becomes a Socinian. Between Socinianism and Deism, there is only a very imperceptible shade. The distance between them is but a step. Accordingly he takes it. But, as Deism itself is, again, an inchorent system, he precipitates himself insensibly into Pyrrhonism,—a state of violence, and just as humiliating to self-love, as it is incompatible with the nature of the human mind. In fine, he concludes by falling into Atheism."—*Art. Unitaires.*

ry for men to believe, in order to obtain salvation?" These, and such as these, were the questions, to which the exclusionists could return no reasonable answer. So that, at present, the Socinians are every where, and without a murmur, allowed to rank themselves amongst the members of the Protestant societies,—although, as the reader knows, they deny the Divinity of Christ; the mystery of the Trinity; the eternity of future punishments, &c.

Considering the above circumstance,—but, still more, the principle upon which it is founded,—I might here again ask the question,—"Where the necessity can be,—or what even is the use,—of such instruments as confessions, and creeds, and forms of faith? What end, or purpose, do they answer, except to check the influences of reason; and to restrict that liberty, which, according to the fundamental law of Protestantism, men, all and each of them, possess of interpreting the Bible by the dictates of their own understandings?" In fact, not only this, but the mere act of teaching, or the most simple instruction, as they serve to prepossess the mind, and to give to it a certain bias,—so do they tend to substitute the authority of the teacher in the room of the capacity, and investigation, of the individual thus instructed,—a circumstance even this, which, if strictly considered, forms another violation of the laws of Protestantism. For, according to those laws, it is not only the privilege, but the duty of every individual to determine his own belief by the dictates of his own judgment. Accord-

ingly, struck with these, and with such like difficulties, various sects of the Reformation, and in particular the Independents, have, long since, rejected all formularies of faith, and even catechisms themselves, in order, as they observe, to confine themselves to the "pure, and only word of God." And these are the men, who, along with the Socinians, form, certainly, by far the most consistent portions of the Protestant community.

XXVIII. I have repeatedly made the observation, that pride, fanaticism, the love of novelty, &c. have, ever since the era of the Reformation, been constantly, and assiduously employed in the abuse of the sacred Scriptures. Whence, the consequence has been, that sects, and errors, have gone on regularly increasing, and multiplying,—rendering Protestantism a scene of the most indescribable confusion. Now, the fact is, that all these sects, and errors, however contradictory, or even preposterous they may chance to be, were created, all of them, out of the same principle; and possess, therefore, each of them, the same claim, if not to approval, at least to toleration. It was, therefore, hence,—that is, on account of this palpable, but unfortunate piece of consistency, that there was, ere long, introduced, and gradually established, that pernicious, but now fashonable system, which, every where, pervades society,—*latitudinarianism.* The propagation of this system, though congenial to Protestantism, and favoured by the general temper of the Protestant public, was particularly aided by the industry of a set

of learned men, who, mild and moderate in their characters, were, for this reason, averse to the extremes, and excesses, of fanaticism, which they, every where, beheld around them. They saw the intemperance, with which a multitude of enthusiasts defended doctrines, not only grossly false, but sometimes profanely wicked. And this, whilst it contributed, still farther, to indispose them, served also, at the same time, to inspire them with a secret repugnance to every kind of mystery. Thus it was, that their reason, unable by itself to comprehend, and unwilling to sustain, the whole weight of mysterious doctrines, began, ere long, to assault the entire fabric itself of Christianity. They even proceeded, some of them, to shake its sacred columns with a still greater degree of violence than that which they had before condemned in others. Assiduously digging to find out, as they pretended, its foundations, they concluded soon, by not leaving in it so much as one stone upon another. Thus it is,—by these easy, but awful means,—always reforming, and improving; simplifying, and retrenching;—that Protestantism is now, every where, become,—and particularly amongst the learned,—a school of Socinianism, and incredulity; of Pyrrhonism, and indifference.

Thus, for example, in this country, the character of religion has been, very generally and systematically, reduced by Hoadley, and his literary followers, to a something that is little better than artfully concealed Deism. Compelled, as these

men consistently felt they were, by the principles of the Reformation,—to allow all men to judge for themselves, and to follow the dictates of their own judgment,—and therefore, of course, to tolerate every order of believers;—they thus opened an abyss, in which all sects and forms of religion come together, and unite;—or to speak more accurately, in which, all plunged together, mutually confound and destroy each other. For, as no *one* religion can properly subsist, but by the rejection of all others—so do they reciprocally expire in each other's embraces. Thus, by removing that sacred barrier, which separates truth from error, and the real worship of Christianity from the pretended reformations of human wisdom, our modern innovators have gone so far as to set aside the very badge,—that distinctive badge,—which points out, and first forms, the Christian,—the divine seal, and stamp, of *Baptism*. Baptism,—which, the Scripture declares is so essential to the security of salvation,—is, according to the school of Hoadley, neither more nor less than an empty, unmeaning ceremony,—a mere childish rite. Such, too, as this is the notion, which is very commonly entertained of the mysterious action in many other Protestant states; insomuch that, in some of them, the civil power has been obliged to interfere, in order to prevent its total abolition. In these,—or at least, in several of these,—if the infant be still a sacred being,—if religion still sheds its amiable influence around its cradle,—it is to the wisdom of the civil policy, that the grati-

tude is due: for, it is its protection alone that has defended the rights both of the Christian, and of the *man*, against the cold, and inexorable indifference of a barbarous theology.*

From England, the doctrines of latetudinarianism, and infidelity, have passed over to America. It is in its newly erected university of Cambridge in particular, that the seeds of irreligion are sown in the minds of the young. Thence, they are carried, and profusely scattered abroad throughout all the provinces of that boundless continent. There they grow, and develope, and expand themselves, with such a degree of luxuriancy, that the old plant of the Reformation is nearly choked under the confusion, and pressure, of their shade. There, as in Europe, the ministers of the countless sects are careful not to shock and offend each other by preaching a series of contested mysteries. Or, rather,—since

* "It is painful," says the learned Bishop of Bath and Wells, Dr. Law,—to notice, with what coldness, with what inattention, our ceremonies, and even the two sacraments themselves, are, for the most part, observed. Thus, with regard to baptism, the first office of our church, the spirituality of the rite appears, at best, to be very inadequately apprehended; and often, not to be considered at all. It is, indeed, outwardly complied with, in deference to custom, and from a regard to legal and secular considerations. The idea, however, of baptism being a means of *grace*, the appointed mode for the communication of God's Holy Spirit,—these awful considerations seldom enter into the minds of the parents, the sponsors, or the people. Surely, this is an ordinance which ought not to be so lightly esteemed, or rather, so entirely disregarded, as appears, alas! to be the case with too many."—*Charge.*

all mysteries are contested,—they appear to be mutually agreed amongst each other not to preach any mystery whatsoever. Their method is, vaguely to dissertate upon certain subjects of morality ; which alone, just like the Deist, they are pleased to inculcate, as essential. It is true, they put the Bible, without note or comment, into the hands of the people :—and in doing this,—that is, in giving them a book, which, either they do not read, or else read without understanding it,—they give them, as they are pleased to call it,—" a religion."

In Protestant Germany, the scene, as it is described by its own Protestant writers, is, if possible, more afflicting still. There, these writers tell us, the very ministers of the different sects, whilst they pretend to revere the Bible as the sole rule of Christian faith, make it, at the same time, their real endeavour to bring it into contempt. By the aid of what they call their "Biblical Exegecis,"—that is, a licentious art of criticism,—they deny the truth of the narratives concerning Moses ;—consider the book of Genesis as little else than a tissue of allegories, or in other words, mere fables ;—reject the prophecies, miracles, &c. Such as this is the general state of the cradle, and nursery, of the Reformation. [See Illustration, I.]

Now, who—(admitting the Protestant rule of faith)—who can prove, that the above interpretations,—which are so convenient to human self-love, and therefore so generally received,—are, after all, subversive of the fundamental principles of Chris-

tianity? It is true, they may seem opposed to the Scriptures. But, if the Protestant rejects them upon this pretext, then should he likewise reject that other canon of biblical criticism, in which he contends, that in certain cases, it is necessary to do violence to the sacred text. It is, therefore, impossible for him,—provided only that he be consistent, —to refuse, I do not say, merely to tolerate, but even to admit, such interpretations, both as clearer in themselves, and as more conformable to human reason.

However, be this as it may, it is, certainly, by the means which I have been describing, that men arrive at that boasted and fashionable system of religion, which they now call "rational Christianity." They curtail from the sacred code, and reject, whatever their reason is unable to comprehend. They, therefore, reject all mysteries;—and therefore again, all dogmas:—since there is no dogma, but what, in one regard or other, includes some mystery: because all mysteries, in one regard or other, bear some relation to infinitude. Now, what, in this case, is the consequence? Is not Socinianism the obvious and direct result? Such, certainly, is the fact. However, unfortunately, the evil does not stop even here. The mind, where it continues to reason on, does not always repose in Socinianism. The principle which it has adopted urges it on still farther: so that, ere long, finding mysteries,—incomprehensible mysteries,—even in Socinianism itself, it concludes frequently, by believing nothing;

and spite, not only of the Scriptures, but of reason, conscience, and the united testimony of mankind, subsides into a state of torpid and unfeeling *indifference.* Here it is, under this frightful state,—that divisions cease;—cease, not by any agreement in doctrines, but by their annihilation. It is true, indeed, that between this state of things and Catholicity, the whole intermediate space is filled up with confusion and contradictions,—with errors of every form, and illusions in every attitude. It is only in the two extremes of Catholicity and infidelity that unity is found to meet;—*in Catholicity*, because there is the plenitude of truth; *in infidelity*, because there is the plenitude of error.

XXIX. A multitude of Protestant theologians have piously laboured hard to guard the public, and to maintain themselves, at a kind of equal distance between Catholicity on one side, and Socinianism, or Deism, on the other,—alike anxious to avoid both of the two extremes. Their efforts, however, as they were acts of inconsistency, have proved fruitless, and unavailing. For, neither do the principles, nor the reason, of the consistent Protestant allow him to stand still between the two. Dogmatically to tolerate a certain number of errors, is, in reality, the positive engagement to tolerate all. Whence, the problem to be solved is this,—"To preserve Christianity, without requiring the distinct belief of any dogma." To this perplexing difficulty, no other, or at least no better answer can be given than that of Chillingworth, who reduces the funda-

mental articles to "an implicit faith in Jesus Christ, and his word." Now, short as is this creed, yet did Bossuet compel its author still farther to abridge it. He even pushed him,—without leaving him so much as one loop-hole to escape,—to the necessity of admitting the toleration of Atheism itself. "This kind of faith," says Bossuet, "with which Mr. Chillingworth is contented,—'I believe what Jesus Christ wishes me to believe, or what his Scriptures teach me,'—means nothing more or less than this,—'I believe all, that I choose to believe: and all that I think proper to attribute to Jesus Christ, and to his word; without excluding from this faith, either any religion, or any of those sects, which admit the Scriptures. Neither, indeed, do I exclude the Jew; because he, like myself, can say,—I believe all, that God wills me to believe; and all that he has announced by his prophets, concerning the Messiah:—a proposition this, which as really includes every truth, and in particular the belief in Jesus Christ, as does the proposition of Mr. Chillingworth. And not only is this the fact; but it is still farther true that, upon this model, another implicit faith may be formed, which the Mahometan, and the Deist may possess, just equally with the Jew and the Christian,—'I believe all, that God knows;'—or to push the point a somewhat farther, one might give even to the Atheist himself a formula, as it were, of implicit faith, expressed in the following words:—'I believe all that is true, and whatsoever is conformable to reason.' This, too, is a proposition, which compri-

ses every thing, even the belief in Christianity; since Christianity is of course true, and its worship, as St. Paul calls it, reasonable."

Bayle, although, as a Protestant, he was interested in justifying the system of fundamentals, yet owns himself compelled to pass the same judgment upon it, as does the good sense of Bossuet. He proves, that, according to the principles of Protestantism, it is impossible, with any thing like consistency, to exclude from salvation any class of heretics whatsoever; and not only this, but not even the Jews, Mahometans, or Pagans:—that is, he contends, that whenever men set aside the unity of truth, as the necessary law of human understanding, they then proclaim absolute liberty of belief; and establish, consequently,—or at least, allow,—as many religions as there are opinions, or judgments, in the minds of men. For, since the principle from which they start does not admit of any limits, so also it is in vain to attempt to impose any restrictions upon its consequences. Be the point what it may, to which men confine these,—straight, the principle, upon which they are founded, protests loudly against the act of violence. And unhappily for the cause of religion, it claims to itself, before the tribunal of real and inflexible logic, a triumph as well over conscience, as over the injunctions of Christian piety.

XXX. I have already remarked, that it is with errors as it is with truths. That is, precisely as all truths are united and linked together, so also it is the case with errors; these are intimately connected

with one another. Whence, it follows, that to tolerate certain errors, and at the same time refuse to tolerate others, which are dependent on them, would be,—according to the canons of a system, which is founded upon the process, and results, of reasoning, —acquitting one set of men on account of their inconsistency; and condemning another, because they have reasoned more coherently, and deduced their conclusions better. To oppose the dictates of common sense is a vain attempt. Prevail they will, at one time or other. And the consequence will be the reign of universal toleration,—a law which is the general, and the necessary, result of error;—and which, also, there is reason to apprehend, is now rapidly advancing to establish its fell dominion upon the ruins of truth, and the destruction of Christian virtue.

In reality, let us again just start from the principle, which is the ground of Protestantism, and the basis of the system of fundamentals. The Bible, according to that principle, is the sole rule of faith. And since Christ Jesus has not, according to it, again,—left any living authority upon earth to interpret the divine volume,—so the consequence is, that each private individual is allowed to interpret it for himself; and to seek out in its sacred pages for that religion, and mode of worship, which he is bound to believe, and cultivate. His duty is simply this,—to believe what, according to his own apprehensions, the Bible teaches clearly; and what is not repugnant to the dictates of his own understanding.

And since no one has a right to say to his neighbour, —" I have a greater share of reason than you have; —my judgment is sounder, and my opinions better, than yours,"—since no one has any right to say this, so does it follow, that no one ought, or can, with any justice, pretend, to condemn the interpretations of other men; but, on the contrary, should consider all religions, and modes of worship, as just equally safe, and equally good, as his own. Besides, although it might so chance, that a man did persuade himself, that he alone is certainly in the right,—still, since it is not, after all in the power of any individual to give himself any infallibility,—so would it, consequently, be wrong to deny salvation to those, who, making the best use of that share of reason, which God has given them, are, nevertheless, we will suppose, unfortunately deceived.

In like manner, it would be a piece of injustice, and inconsistency, to refuse salvation to those, whose judgment, not discerning clearly that the Scriptures are inspired,—for this reason, either entertain doubts respecting revelation, or, it may be, formally deny it:—"because," they say, "after having very seriously, and maturely, examined the question, we still find the most peremtory and insuperable objections against it." Now, since reason is the only acknowledged judge, and interpreter, of the sacred volume,—and, of course, in the order of analysis, the sole foundation of their belief, or opinions,—so, consequently, to pretend to oblige them to believe what is contrary to the dic-

tates of their reason, is an act, not only of inconsistency, but even (the above principle admitted) of injustice.

XXXI. Wherefore it is thus proved, that the Protestants, in order to be consistent, are reduced to the manifest necessity of tolerating, not only all those sects which admit the Scriptures,—such as the Arians, the Unitarians, the Socinians, and so on,—but even the very Deists, who reject them;—or who rather, as they contend, reject only those *human* interpretations, which the Protestant churches think proper to affix to them. For, in reality, the Deist does admit the Scripture upon the self-same title as does the Protestant; he interprets it after the self-same method;—and finally, just like the Protestant again,—he refuses merely to believe, what to him appears either obscure, or repugnant to the dictates of his reason. Thus, Rousseau, for example, bestows the highest and most eloquent praises upon the sacred volumes. It was his practice to read them unceasingly; and "their holiness," he tells us, "and their sublimity, spoke feelingly to his heart." In like manner, Lord Herbert (of Cherbury) calls Christianity "the most beautiful of all institutions." Such too, as this is the ordinary language of many Deists, who, by denying revelation, contend,—just as the Socinians do in denying the divinity of Christ,—that they understand the Scriptures still better than do the Protestants; and that even they obey, still more faithfully than the latter, the com-

mands of Christ, who, according to them, preached no other religion but that of *nature.*

It is painful to the pious, and believing, Protestant to see consequences imputed to his principles, which he not only rejects, but views with the same degree of horror as does the Catholic himself. However, be this as it may,—if those consequences be really contained in his principles,—then, so far from being an act of illiberality, it is, on the contrary, an act of charity to point them out. Accordingly, not only do the Socinians, and the Deists, defend their respective errors by the principles of the Reformation, but even the very Atheist himself does the same. Presenting himself, in his turn, before the Protestant, he with confidence addresses him thus: "Like you, I acknowledge no other tribunal but that of my own reason. Like you, I believe what my reason comprehends; and, like you, I reject, what appears to my reason unintelligible. Thus, to you, transubstantiation; to the Calvinist, the real presence, appear absurd. You, therefore, both, disbelieve those dogmas: and you are, both, in the right. The Socinian, and Unitarian, do not understand the Trinity: they, therefore, refuse to admit it; and they, too, are in the right. The Deist, as he understands no mystery whatsoever, so he rejects all mysteries. And he, again, is in the right. Now, in my eyes, the Divinity is the greatest, and the most impenetrable of all mysteries. My reason cannot possibly comprehend the existence of an eternal Being: and therefore, I cannot

believe it. I merely claim to myself the same right as you do; or as do the Calvinist, the Unitarian, the Socinian, and the Deist. You, and they, and myself, have all and each of us, the self-same rule of faith. We all of us equally exclude any other authority, save that of reason. Therefore, with what consistency, or with what justice, can you pretend to condemn or censure me? If I ought to renounce *my* reason; or if you conceive *me* criminal for listening to its suggestions,—do you then yourself give up *your* reason too, which is not more infallible than mine;—abjure your rule of faith; and declare honestly at once, that what you have hitherto taught according to this rule, is founded upon no substantial basis; and that if the truth do really exist any where, you are as yet unacquainted with the means by which it may be discovered." Such as this is the reasoning, and such the language, of the Atheist.

Considering the above reasoning, inasmuch as it is founded upon the leading principle of the Reformation, it does certainly follow from it, that the Protestants cannot, with any real consistency, or without violating their own maxims, refuse toleration to the Atheist himself. They may say, indeed, that he makes bad use of his reason, and that he is not sincere. But, might not the same thing precisely be said of the Socinian, the Unitarian, and in fact of the whole herd of heretics, without exception? Such reproach is, no doubt, unmeaning, and without any force, in the mouths of all sectarists

whatsoever; because they have all, and each of them, a just and equal right to address it to one another. What the Lutheran says of the Atheist, the Atheist can say just equally of the Lutheran. And who, in such case, is the judge between them?—Reason? But, it is the judgment of reason precisely that is contested. For, each pretends, that reason determines in his own favour. So that to call in reason to decide the difficulty, or the difference between them, is, in fact, but solving the question by the question itself. It is making a mockery of common sense.

It is indeed certain, that, in pretending to confine the boundaries of incredulity, by requiring the belief of a few articles denominated "fundamentals," the Protestants have done little else than betray the greatness of their own inconsistency. For, in the first place, they have neither determined, what these supposed fundamentals are; nor, in the next place, is the determination of them even so much as possible. In fact, how is it possible to separate objects, which are intimately linked together? In religion, there is nothing isolated. One truth reposes upon another, which serves as a kind of foundation to it. Its divine dogmas,—all of them,—flow, as it were, from each other;—following each other in the nicest order, and uniting together in the most perfect harmony; so that, without ever finding in them the slenderest point of division, we may trace them, one by one, up to the bosom itself of the Divinity,—that ever-living and eternal source from which every

truth proceeds. It is impossible to deny any one of them, without being obliged, if consistent, to deny them all. Whence, the consequence is, that the disbelief of all the mysteries of revelation is the direct result of the principles of the Reformation; and the natural complement of this fatal system. Protestantism, until this unhappy effect takes place, is replete with contradictions.

It would seem, that certain Protestant writers have felt this alarming circumstance. For, some of them, in order to preserve religion, have suggested, that the best, or only expedient to do this, is to make it over to the prince, or the civil power; and transform it at once into a political institution. But, surely, a resource like this, if it be not the sanction of Atheism, is, at all events, the approval of that degree of indifference to all religion, which approaches the nearest to it. "It is certain," says Jurieu, "that princes are born the heads of the Christian church, just equally as they are born the heads of the civil government. They are alike the masters of religion and of the state." Such too as this is the language of several other Protestant writers. Now, if such as this be the authority of princes, that they can ordain creeds, and establish modes of worship, according to the dictates of their own interests, or opinions,—then should men talk no more of the Bible, of revelation, and fundamentals. Creeds, when they are thus degraded, become a mere kind of tax, imposed upon the public, for the benefit of the state; and which the prince may ei-

ther lighten or increase, accordingly as the character of the times, and the nature of circumstances may seen to require; or as the caprice of his own fancy may chance to dictate.

Thus, then, it is manifest, both from the testimonies of experience, and from the reasonings and inferences of the soundest logic, that the principles of Protestantism conduct inevitably, *whenever men follow them up with consistency*, not only to the production of every form of error, but to the general rejection of revelation altogether; and still farther, to an absolute indifference to all religion whatsoever. Following up those principels *with consistency*, the mind becomes early perplexed, uneasy, and beset with doubts. Unable to satisfy itself, it, ere long, concludes by the disbelief of all revealed mysteries whatsoever. Thus it is, that faith gradually vanishes and disappears; and with it, worship, piety, and morals. Irreligion, or indifference, alone, remain:—alone, stand erect, amidst the scene of the awful shipwreck.

But, at all events, I have said enough, in the foregoing pages, to excite the attention of the thoughtful and prudent Protestant;—enough even to engage the thoughtless themselves to *doubt*. I have said enough to make them feel, that the neglect of truth, or a blind indifference to the interests of religion, are not less the melancholy pledges of future security, than they are the pitiful claims to any superiority of understanding. In short, I have said enough to prove this truth,—that, unless the

Protestant do examine and compare, with serious and impartial industry, both the grounds of his belief in Protestantism, and the foundation of his disbelief in Catholicity, he not only disobeys the strictest injunctions of Christian prudence, but violates, moreover, the most essential of his own leading principles.

XXXII. There are various causes, however,—although I shall not enumerate them,—-why the Protestant refuses to investigate the claims, and discuss the character, of the *Catholic religion.* One of these,—for I will just cite one or two of them,—is the *ignorance*,—the strange, the false, the preposterous notions which he entertains of our sacred institution. For, although there be perhaps no subject, that is more familiar to him than that of "Popery;"—none, upon which he dwells more delightfully, and dissertates more fluently,—(it is the constant topic of his conversations, and the favourite theme of his invectives,)—yet is it true, that there is no one subject upon which his ignorance is more pitiful, and his notions more erroneous. The circumstance is, unhappily, but too natural. For, not only is the whole education of the Protestant—(I speak with some exceptions)—from the very lap of the nurse to the completion of his studies in the schools, a system of misrepresentation of our religion, but every thing almost in society contributes to burn still deeper upon his mind, the false and pernicious impressions,—-conversation, the laws,

the pulpit, and above all,—still worse than the sword of persecution,—*the pen, and the press.**—And, then to correct, or counteract, all this injus-

* Gross as are the insults, and heavy the injuries, which we sustain from the *pulpit;* yet it is not, I conceive, after all, the furious preacher,—not such men as the Cunninghams, the Moyseys, and many even whom I could name within the circle of my own acquaintance, who make it their Sunday trade to declaim, good men! against Popery,—it is not, I conceive, these, nor yet such men as the severe Dr. Bloomfield, or the intolerant Dr. Burgess, that so effectually contribute, at the present day, to nourish the public prejudices against our religion, as do the hosts of our light and superficial scribblers,—the authors of novels, travels, &c. These, nearly all of them, are full of the pretended descriptions of Catholicity: and as their number is countless, and their narratives entertaining,—so they are in the hands of every body, and universally read. Accordingly it is from these,—although they are written by a set of men who, in general, know no more of our religion than so many children;—men who have never given themselves the slenderest pains to understand its tenets;—men, often indolent, dissipated, and idle; and, not unfrequently, mercenary and interested;—it is from these, that the public now form their notions of our religion. Their tales are eagerly received as so many truths; their misrepresentations, as certainties; and their ridicule, as wit. It is not indeed, that, amongst the members of our church, there do not exist a variety of abuses, superstitions, frauds, vices, &c. such, unhappily, is the fact; and we allow it. But then, considering the immensity of our numbers, and the character and weakness of the human mind, can good sense suppose, that the case can possibly be otherwise? Such evils are but in the natural, and even necessary order of human occurrences; whilst also it is true, that the best things are, often, the things that are most abused. And, then, ought not good sense too, to remember this,—that the alleged disorders, after all, are the effects, not of the observance, but

tice, he never,—or at least, hardly ever,—gives himself the trouble to consult any proper medium for correct instruction,—neither any Catholic writer,

of the violation, of Catholic principles;—the acts, if you will, of the Catholic, but not of Catholicity? And should he not again, recollect, that, if in our church there do exist many abuses,—still, along with these, there exist many perfections likewise? The enlightened man considers both; blaming, indeed, what is wrong, but not hence condemning the institution. But, unhappily, both for himself and for us,—the Protestant sees nothing,—looks at nothing,—in our religion, but its abuses.

It is a subject of curiosity, which often amuses the Catholic, —to trace the very different portraits, which the prejudices, and partialities, of our Protestant writers are pleased alternately to exhibit, when they pretend to delineate the characters, and actions, of Catholics; and the qualities and conduct, of the members of their own communions. Thus, suppose a Catholic be active and zealous, he is sure to be described as a bigot, or a persecutor; let the Protestant be active and zealous, he is, as certainly, a saint, and an apostle. Let the Catholic be pious, and attentive to certain exterior duties,—he is, forsooth, a narrow-minded, and superstitious fanatic; let the Protestant be pious and exact in his religious observances, Oh! then *he* is devout, and conscientious. If the Catholic be scrupulous, he is an artful hypocrite; if the Protestant be scrupulous, *he* is holiness itself. In like manner, in relation to *vice:*—Let the Catholic commit a crime, and he is a monster of iniquity; let the Protestant do the same, and *his* crime is but a trifling imperfection. If the Catholic be wicked and corrupted, *his* vices are the faults of his religion, and the disorders of the *whole* Catholic body; if the Protestant be corrupted, *his* corruption is of little or no moment, being only the misfortune of the individual himself. In short, to believe our Protestant writers, the Catholic religion has no perfections; Protestantism, no defects:—the Catholic has no virtues; the Protestant, no vices.

nor any well-instructed Catholic. He neither suspects,—as he would do in any other case of violent accusation,—that the imputations may be false; or that the charges are exaggerated. Imposed upon by the defectiveness of his early education;—deceived by a set of preachers, who are, themselves, the dupes of ignorance, and prejudice;—cheated by

And let the reader again remark, still farther, the force of prejudice and partiality. Thus, for example, let the most trifling hardship fall upon the Protestant,—straight the nation is in a flame; and the Catholic is reviled as a sanguinary persecutor; let the Catholic writhe under the agonies of persecution, and the Protestant is completely indifferent to it. Thus, how few are the Protestants, who feel at all for the disgraceful and grinding laws which still oppress us! Not our loyalty, not our services, not our bravery in the field, not all the torrents of Catholic blood, that have been shed in the defence of a Protestant country, can excite in the mind of the Protestant the slenderest feeling in our favour. Nothing, in his eyes, can atone for the crime of being a Catholic.

In like manner, let the Catholic vindicate his religion, his vindication is deemed abuse; let the Protestant insult and deride it, his insult and derision are looked upon as zeal. In our defence, the Protestant sees nothing but bigotry. In the injustice done to us, he sees nothing but interest for the public good. Thus it is that the grossest falsehoods are, every day, vomited out against us by a set of men, whose insolence is only equalled by their ignorance; and whose ignorance is only exceeded by their want of candour. And yet, because the injustice is aimed at Popery, the whole is greedily swallowed, and as piously believed; and not only indeed this,—but very liberally rewarded. It is with reason, that Count Le Maistre, speaking of the English, says of them: "Jamais il n'exista une nation plus aisée à tromper, ni plus difficile a détromper, ni plus puissante pour tromper les autres."

works, which are the effusions of hostility, bigotry, and interest;—he lives on, calmly and imprudently, contented and secure,—violating, alike, both his own principles, which bid him discuss before he believes; and the rules of justice, which command him to listen to the accused, ere he ventures to condemn.

I do not say, that, having done this,—having even studied our religion carefully,—he will therefore be induced to embrace it. He may not do this: for, faith is the effect of *grace*. But, at all events, his knowledge will produce this effect: He will no more condemn or insult our religion; and although his sin may be greater, still it will be a less stupid sin than it is at present. For, then, like the angel of pride, he will choose between truth and falsehood, between right and wrong, with a knowledge of the cause.

However, such, unhappily, is the case;—there are no disorders which it is so difficult to cure, as the disorders of the understanding. The passions of the heart may be soothed, and rendered calm. Conflicting interests may be reconciled, and enmities done away. All this is the work of time; and time, by degrees, effects it. But, against the disorders of error, time has, in general, hardly any effect whatever: because, still fostered by prejudices, and animated by the passions which it engenders, error constantly goes on increasing, and never waxes old. Hence, therefore, it is,—from the fruits of ignorance, generated chiefly by misrepresentation; and from the disorders of the understanding, produced

by misconception,—that the Protestant refuses, with so much obstinacy, to investigate the character of his parent church.

XXXIII. Another circumstance, which forms a powerful obstacle to this important study, is the severity of those *restraints*, which our religion imposes upon the propensities of self-love, and upon all the disorders, and sensualities, of the human heart. Men, unfortunately, as our Redeemer observes, "love darkness better than the light." It was, accordingly, this disordinate preference, that was one of the causes,—perhaps, the chief cause,—why, at the era of the Reformation, men abandoned the ancient church with so much levity. That revolution gave them liberty; emancipated passion; and abolished all those severities, which are painful to flesh and blood.* Indeed, I am convinced, that, taking

* One of the institutions of the Catholic church, which because it appears humiliating is perhaps of all others the most painful in the eyes of the Protestant, is the practice of *confession.* On this subject, however, his repugnances, and objections, are the fruits of self-love, ignorance, or pride. For, in reality, amongst all our various obligations, there is not, perhaps, one, which, —besides being highly beneficial,—besides being a powerful cheek to vice, and a prolific source of virtue,—is better calculated at the same time to promote,—or which does more effectually promote,—that peace of mind, and tranquillity of conscience, which constitute, in this life, the best feelings of human happiness. These are facts, which every Catholic will attest, who has piously frequented our tribunals of penance. They are facts, which many of the early Protestants in particular have acknowledged; attributing to the suppression of confession amongst the reformed societies that inundation of cor-

away from our religion its severities,—but, supposing it to possess, at the same time, all its other divine features,—not only, in such case, would men be induced to study its sacred claims; but they would even, in multitudes, hasten back to their pa-

ruption, which disgraced their partisans: insomuch that they, some of them, loudly solicited the re-establishment of the sacred practice, as the only means of recalling men to a sense of religion. They are facts, which some of our own Protestant writers have remarked; observing, for example, that it is only since the disuse of confession, that the crime of suicide,—now, proverbially English,—has been known in this country. They still farther remark, that it is owing chiefly, as they conceive, to the use of confession, that the Catholics, beyond all other religionists, are distinguished for their habitual cheerfulness. But as attestations of the utility of confession, I will just cite the sentiments of a few of the men who are notorious for their hostility to our religion,—the members of what is called the "School of Philosophy." Thus, for instance, Voltaire says, "Confession is an excellent institution,—a check to vice. It is admirably calculated to engage hearts, which are ulcerated by hatred, to forgive; and to induce those, who have been guilty of injustice, to make restitution. It is, above all, the greatest preventive of all secret sins."—"What restitutions and reparations," says Rousseau, "does not confession produce amongst the Catholics!"—"The best of all governments," says Raynal, "would be a theocracy, in which there was established a tribunal of confession, provided it were always conducted by virtuous men, and upon rational principles."—"How salutary a preservative for the morals of youth," says Marmontel "is the practice and obligation of going every month to confession! The shame alone of this humble acknowledgment of the most secret sins would, perhaps, do more to prevent the commission of a greater number of crimes, than all other motives put together, however holy these might chance to be."

rent fold. Between the Catholic and the Protestant religions, there is this very obvious difference, or distinction: that, for a man to become a Catholic commands very powerful strength of mind,—a spirit of mortification, and the willingness to submit to many arduous and holy exercises; whereas, to become,—or to be,—a Protestant, requires neither any share of fortitude nor yet any degree of any virtue whatsoever. It requires both a spirit of liberty, passions, weaknesses, and so on. For, to be a Protestant, according to the correct definition of Dr. Burgess, is merely *to reject Popery*. Whence, also, as I have before remarked, not only are all the countless sectarists of the Reformation,—no matter how absurd their tenets.—really Protestants; but the unbelievers themselves,—the Socinian or the Deist,—are just as much so, as are the very professors of the thirty-nine articles. Wherefore, since it is thus natural for men to love liberty, and freedom from all control, so also it is easy to understand, why they are averse to the study and cultivation of a religion, whose whole order and economy are so designed and arranged, as to impose fetters upon every bad passion, and darling propensity, of the human heart. It is upon this account,—that is, in consequence of the various painful, and awkward, restrictions, which the wisdom of Catholicity imposes upon its members,—it is upon this account, that we occasionally, even now, behold the spectacle of a few unhappy and miserable renegadoes,—the victims most commonly of immorality, or else the

dupes of interest, or the grossest ignorance,—abandoning our communion, and uniting themselves to the ranks of Protestantism,—not, however, as the believers in the established church, but as the believers, most generally, in *no church.**

*The following facts serve to illustrate the tendency, and relative characters of the Protestant, and the Catholic, religions. They are obvious facts, which the inquirer, if he please, may ascertain, without any difficulty. They are simply these,—that, whenever any Protestant becomes a proselyte to the Catholic religion, he is always one of the best instructed in the circle in which he moves; and he becomes uniformly a more moral, and edifying, person than he had been before his conversion. Thus, if he be a clergyman, it is some scholar, distinguished for his learning, and great abilities,—a Chamberlayne, a Best, a Tilt; if an individual from the higher classes of society, it is one who is possessed of splendid intellectual acquirements,—a Digby, a Phillips, a Vincent;—if from the middle, but still affluent, ranks of the community, it is always a set of persons who, remarkable for their good sense, have read, examined, and meditated, seriously;—if even from the very lowest orders of public life, the converts to our religion are, with hardly an exception, a portion of individuals who, in talents, character, and respectability, are superior to others of the same condition, who surround them. Such as this is the general, and almost universal, character of our proselytes to Catholicity; whilst their conduct, corresponding to the heroism of their conversion (for, their conversion is sure to draw down upon them the persecution of their friends,) is remarkable for its steadiness, piety, and edification. They form some of the fairest flowers in the garden of our church.

On the other hand, take a view of the apostates, who in these latter times have deserted our communion, and gone over to the ranks of Protestantism. They, most certainly, were not the *flowers*, that adorned our spiritual garden, but much rather, as

XXXIV. A third objection, which the Protestants very frequently urge against the Catholic religion, and which is another reason why multitudes

Swift calls such renegadoes in his times, "the weeds cast out of it." Thus, if the apostate be a priest, it is, almost uniformly, some unfortunate and dissipated being, who, tired of the restraints of celibacy, violates his vows, and takes to himself a wife. If he be one of our nobility, or gentry, it is some thoughtless or immoral individual, who, careless about all religion, or else guided by vanity, interest, or ambition, is solicitous to obtain a seat on the benches of our senate. If he be one of the inferior orders of the community, it is sure to be, as in the above case, either some unfortunate person who has lost all sense of piety, or else some poor, or stupidly ignorant, being, who, like Lord Farnham's converts, has been tempted from his religion, and bought over "by the Friday's bacon." Such as these are the ordinary deserters of our religion,—a set of very bad Catholics, who make a set of very bad Protestants: for we find by experience, that they, nearly all, upon their death-beds, struck with horror at their past conduct, return back to their parent church. From these few circumstances we may form a very correct idea, of the relative nature, and tendency, of the Protestant and the Catholic religions.

"Another proof of the want of holiness in the Protestant church," says the Earl of Shrewsbury, after having enumerated several more of these awkward attestations,—"another proof of the want of holiness in the Protestant church is this:—that those who leave the Catholic communion for the establishment, invariably show by their conduct, that they do so, solely in furtherance of their worldly interests, and to enjoy a greater latitude, both of faith and practice. In deserting their religion, they almost always desert their morality with it. Yet, even then, they generally flatter themselves with the hope of returning to die in the bosom of the ancient faith. They say within themselves, Yours is the church, in which we will live at our

of them are withheld rom the very thought of its investigation,—is the alleged multitude, and incomprehensibility, of its *mysterious doctrines*. This, in-

ease; but we will return to our own to die in penitence, and peace.

"Far different from this is the conduct of the converts to Catholicity;—evincing the purity of their motives by the severity of their religious observances, and by the example of disinterested piety, which they exhibit to the world. No one scarcely has yet left us, who has lived well, and died happily. Hardly any one has yet sought and found us, who has not been a pattern of virtue while living, and a saint in death."

His Lordship's observation, respecting the insincerity of our Catholic apostates, will be found strikingly illustrated in the conduct of that unhappy set of beings, whom we have recently seen seduced from their religion by the industry, and bigotry, of the members of the "New Reformation." Not only in Ireland, but lately also in this country, societies have been formed, and very carefully organised, for the express purpose of withdrawing the Catholics from their parent church. And the consequence has been, that, by the aid of bribes, and pensions, and promises,—and so on,—they did succeed in buying off a considerable number of poor and half-starved wretches from our communion. And yet what, after all, has been the conduct of these unhappy beings? Why, that, stung with remorse at the crime of their apostacy, they have, nearly all of them, returned to do penance in the pale of the church, which they had abandoned. I am indeed convinced, that it is absolutely impossible for any well-instructed Catholic to become, under the present state of Protestantism, a sincere proselyte to any Protestant communion. Merely to ascertain what is the religion, or what are the doctrines, of the established church itself, is one of those *riddles*, which no ingenuity can unravel: whilst, in like manner, to explain the alleged delegation of its clergy, as founded upon their succession to the Catholic ministry, is little better than a *fable*, which no *impartial* wisdom can comprehend.

deed, is an argument, which, besides being often urged, possesses, moreover, a very powerful and pernicious influence, not so much over the minds of the vulgar, as over the feelings of multitudes of our more polished and literary characters.

That an objection like the above should be employed by a set of men such as the Socinian, the Latitudinarian, and the Deist,—men who reject all mysteries, and the belief in revelation itself,—this is not surprising. It is but consistent with their principles. But, that it should be urged by individuals or by those classes of Protestants, who, besides the general admission of revelation, admit also in their respective creeds a variety of mysterious doctrines,—this is a circumstance,—a piece of inconsistency,—which ingenuity would in vain attempt to justify. It is true, then, that the Catholic religion does profess, and propose to our belief, a variety of mysterious doctrines,—a series of sublime and awful truths, which no created capacity can comprehend, no human imagination penetrate. And what, therefore, in such case, ought to appear,—or rather, *is*—the consequence? Why, that so far from weakening the faith of the enlightened Christian, the circumstance ought rather to strengthen and edify it. In reality, even in the natural order of things itself, is not almost every object a mystery to the human understanding? Insomuch that if we are to believe only what we understand, the consequence would be, that we should believe nothing at all. The heavens, the earth, the sea, life, death,

yea the merest grain of sand that we tread upon, the least particle of straw that is carried about by the wind, are objects incomprehensible to our reason. And shall we then, weak and little as we are, pretend to measure the ways of God,—his nature, and his attributes; the extent of his omnipotence, or the wisdom and plan of his designs? On the contrary, our manifest duty is, to reflect with humility upon our own littleness; and, without presuming to require of God an account of his inscrutable ordinances,—simply to believe, be thankful and adore. In reality, the inaccessible height of his doctrines is one of the strongest attestations of their heavenly origin. A religion without mysteries, would be essentially a false religion;—because it would neither present to us the idea, nor the feeling, of infinitude. A religion without *obscurities* would be even an absurd religion, or rather, no religion at all;—because it would leave us in a state of complete ignorance respecting the Divinity himself, who is manifestly far beyond the reach of all human comprehension.*

* We are surrounded every where with mysteries. There is hardly one single subject, or object, in nature, that we perfectly understand. How little do we know of spirit; or even of matter, or its properties! We can, indeed, measure the size of matter, and describe its form, colour, and so on; but still, we do not penetrate its qualities. We comprehend little or nothing beyond its surfice. In like manner, we see the effects of nature, and can sometimes trace their causes; but, we know not, either how those effects are produced, nor why they follow from such and such a cause. We see, for example, that seed

Hence, therefore, if the Catholic religion be obscure in its dogmas, it is only because it is divine; —because it transports us into the regions of *infinite;* displaying to our astonished sight an endless,

sown, soon produces, or becomes, a plant; but, by what process it becomes such,—of this we are completely ignorant. Even is man himself an entire mystery to man. For, where is the philosopher that can describe, either what, or where, is the principle of life within us? Or who is he that can account for the origin, and effects, of the human will? If therefore we do not comprehend the objects of nature itself,—what wonder can there be, that we do not understand the still more sublime mysteries of religion? The fact is that so far from objecting to religion, on account of its mysteries,—it is these,—it is its very mysteries,—that ought to excite our higher esteem and admiration of it.

Indeed, take away from Christianity its mysteries,—and what then is it! or where is its great use, or benefit? Where even is the proof, or sign, that it comes from heaven? In this case, it but resembles other moral institutions: and Christ himself is little else than an ordinary teacher,—his dignity lost; his claims to our admiration lessened; and the chief end for which he came on earth rendered doubtful, and suspicious. For, if Christ had taught nothing more than what is human, he might, and would, have been looked upon, as nothing more than a mere human being. There could not, in such a case, have been any necessity of sending down from heaven a divine Being; nor any reason why, after having attested only common things, he should have risen from his grave again.

In relation, therefore, to our mysteries, what alone the Protestant should labour to ascertain, is simply their *authenticity;* that is, he should consider them as objects of *fact*, not as questions of *science*. He should endeavour, by the rules of wise criticism, to ascertain, whether they have really been revealed. *If they have*, then, be what they may, they must be believed essentially.

boundless perspective, in which the eye seeks in vain for limits, which recede, and for ever retire, before it. Did our religion boast of dissipating the clouds, which hang over the objects of religion, as weil as over the human understanding, she would, by such act, proclaim at once her own insolence and falsehood. Hence the language, which she addresses to mankind, is such as this : " Study well to to know the truths, which the wisdom of God has been pleased to reveal unto you : but think not, that in this life, you are designed to comprehend them clearly. They are objects too bright for the human eye to bear to look on ;—doctrines too transcendent and sublime, for the narrow capacities of mortal beings to pretend to penetrate. In order, however, that you may attain the knowledge of them, and attain it with enlightened certitude,—the same wisdom, which has communicated them to you, has at the same time prepared, and presented to you, the most satisfactory *evidences*, to establish their authenticity,—a series of *facts*, and attestations, the most palpable, and adapted to the measure of the human capacity. *These*,—although they do not enable you to understand the truths themselves proposed to your belief,—point out to you clearly what they are ; and evince, that it is not less an act of reason, than it is a point of duty, to believe them. They conduct you by the hand to the sanctuary of the true religion, but they do not draw aside the veil which conceals its mysteries. Therefore, consult, and follow, these : for, this is the whole that reason

should do: Let your understanding yield to the obedience of faith. God equally, and with equal justice, demands from you the sacrifice of your understanding, as he requires the submission of the will." Such as this is the language of our religion, as it is in fact but the language of common sense. For man to pretend to penetrate, and measure, the abysses of the eternal mind;—or to assert, as the Protestant does unceasingly, in relation to our Catholic mysteries,—that such and such a dogma is "absurd, impossible, false," &c. only because his feeble capacity is pleased to think it so;—all this, in the eyes of real Christian wisdom, is just as profane, as it is inconsistent. In religion, it is humility that forms the basis of faith, of knowledge, and security. Man fell by pride, and it is, therefore, by humiliy that he is destined, and instructed, to rise again.*

* Speaking of the Catholic doctrine of *transubstantiation*, Mr. Stanley Faber, in his "Difficulties of Romanism," makes the following sensible observations: (Would only that the generality of his other observations but resembled these!) "While arguing," he says, "upon this subject, some persons, I regret to say, have been far too copious in the use of those unseemly terms, *absurdity*, and *impossibility*. To such language the least objection is its reprehensible want of good manners. A much more serious objection is, the tone of presumptuous loftiness which pervades it, and which is wholly unbecoming a creature of very narrow faculties. Certainly God *will* do nothing absurd; and *can* do nothing impossible. But, it does not therefore exactly follow, that *our* view of things should be always perfectly correct, and wholly free from misapprehension. Contradictions we may easily *fancy*, where in truth there *are* none. Hence, before we venture to pronounce any particular doctrine to be a

XXXV. From the operation of the above causes, the reader will, without any difficulty, understand, why the investigation of the character of the Catholic religion is so seldom undertaken by the Protestant, upon whose feelings they are unceasingly pressed, with the most ardent and industrious care. Indeed, not only is it the natural effect of those causes to check, and prevent, the study of our religion, but it is also to them that we may attribute a large share of those inveterate prejudices, which, in this

contradiction, we must be sure, that we perfectly understand, the nature of the matter propounded in that doctrine ; for otherwise the contradiction may not be in the matter itself, but *in our mode of conceiving it*. In regard to myself, as my conscientiously finite intellect claims not to be an universal measure of congruities and possibilities, I deem it both more wise, and more decorous, to refrain from assailing the doctrine of transubstantiation, on the ground of its alleged absurdity, or impossibility.

"By such a mode of attack, we in reality quit the true field of rational and satisfactory argument. The doctrine of transubstantiation, like the doctrine of the Trinity, is a question, not of abstract reasoning, but of *pure evidence*. We believe the revelation of God to be essential, unerring truth. Our business, therefore, most plainly is, not to discuss the abstract absurdity, and the imagined contradictoriness, of transubstantiation, but to inquire, according to the best means which we possess, whether it be indeed a doctrine of holy Scripture. If sufficient evidence shall appear to be the case, we may be sure that the doctrine is neither absurd nor contradictory. Receiving the Scripture as the infallible word of God, and prepared with entire prostration of mind to admit *his* declarations, I shall ever contend, that the doctrine of transubstantiation, like the doctrine of the Trinity, is a question of *pure evidence*."

country, the Protestant is taught to entertain for his parent church. Protestantism, it is true, is the creature of animosity. And from this circumstance again, without needing to refer to any other, it is at once easy to account for all that rancour, which pervades the public mind, in relation to Catholicity. Protestantism, is the child of rebellion. It was cradled, and fed, and grew, by discord : it is, therefore, by the spirit of discord, and hostility, that it still lives. These are still the real principles of its life, and animation. These are the great levers, by which it acts upon the credulity, and weakness, of its followers. It exists, every where, without any real affection for its own doctrines; or at least, without any rational conviction that they are divine. The proof of this is manifest; since we, every where, behold its members varying in their belief, and daily altering their opinions. To all the countless multitude of its sects, almost every thing is alike, and equal, provided only that it be not Catholic. Children of the same parent, offspring of the same principle, they all possess one feeling in relation to each other, and one general sentiment in regard to us. They all live amicably amongst each other, notwithstanding that they respectively profess codes of doctrine the most opposite and contradictory. They all insult and vilify us,—considering the Catholic as their common enemy, hating us from principle, and ill-treating us from habit, inte-

rest, and education.* Thus, too, precisely it anciently was with the professors, and laws, of paganism. These, all, quietly tolerated every imaginary form of error; whilst they poured out all their indignation upon the Catholic church alone. Indeed, we have beheld the government of this country extend even to its pagan settlements a degree of liberality and privilege, which it had long sternly refused to its Catholic subjects. But, the unfortunate truth is this:—Extinguish once in the minds of the Protestant public the hostility to the Catholic religion, and there would soon be an end to Protestantism. Neither is this any secret to the ministers, above all of the established church. These illiberals know it well; and it is for this reason that they are, some of them, so assiduous; and labour with such indefatigable industry, to nourish the odious sentiment. Hence, their calumnies, their misrepresentations, and their lies. Hence, those insults, that ridicule, and those pitiful imputations, which disgrace almost every publication, and discourse, in which

* "Chi offende, non pardona." Whenever men are guilty of rebellion and usurpation, they are always sure,—and the thing is only natural,—to be violent in their own defence, and unjust to the party which they have injured and oppressed. They justify themselves, by alleging a variety of crimes, disorders, &c. And the calumnies and misrepresentations, which they employ upon such occasions, are always the more violent and ill-founded, in proportion as the victim, which they have sacrificed, is the more innocent; and as the measure of the wrong, which they have inflicted, is the more notorious and detestable. The lamb is, of course, always in the wrong with the wolf.

they pretend to describe, or refute, the religion of the Roman Catholic.* [See Illustration, K.]

XXXVI. Wherefore seeing thus, how feeble are the arguments, and how groundless the pretexts, which withhold the Protestant from the study of our religion, let me, once more, suggest to him that piece of prudence, which I have proposed to him

*Nothing can be more preposterous than the method by which the Protestants in general pretend to investigate the character, and claims, of the Catholic religion. It is precisely like the conduct of the man who, wishing to find out the source and beauties of the Nile, forces his way, at once, across the numberless branches of the Delta; where, soon, he gets lost; or it may be, miserably perishes. Either they study the nature of our mysteries, which are incomprehensible; or else they consider only the very objects which form no part of our religion, and which even it condemns severely, - the abuses, and superstitions, which subsist amongst its immoral, and its ignorant, members. When the Protestant, therefore, undertakes to examine our religion, his method should be this,—as it is in all regular systems: to begin from some fixed and incontestable principle, and to follow up, and apply, this wisely; until step by step, from idea to idea, from reasoning to reasoning, he is conducted gradually to that conclusion, when the mind, if candid, is satisfied, and unable, any longer, to resist the force of truth. Religion is one of those sciences, which is *a limine salutanda.* Here, we must begin from the beginning,—from the *source*, and proceed carefully down the stream. Then every thing becomes easy, pleasant, and satisfactory. The bearings, the relations, the dependencies, &c. of one truth upon another unfold themselves, of themselves; and without either risk, or difficulty, we go on, and advance, until the steam loses itself, ere long, in the great ocean of the Divinity. The adoption of this method conducts to Catholicity:—the neglect of it to error, and incredulity.

before,—to begin *to doubt;* and doubting, to begin to *examine.* Let him, above all, weigh well the nature, and tendency, of his own leading rule of faith; and compare this with the rule, which guides, and directs, the Catholic,—the former, made the source of every error; the latter, the principle of concord, and security. Such, certainly, is the importance of the subject, that it should seem well to demand his most serious and attentive care.

And let him, too, laying aside alike both his prejudices and his partialities,—with a mind open, and anxious, to receive the rays of truth, let him take a view of the distinctive features, which respectively mark the Catholic church; and the churches, or sects, of Protestantism. Let him view the Catholic church,—the rock of ages, the sanctuary of the saints, the abode of his own renowned forefathers, in which, linked together in unity, and as the children of one great family, their days moved calmly on, in security, and peace. It is the religion to which this country owes the wisdom of its laws, and the excellence of its institutions; to which it owes even its liberty, and its Magna Charta;—the religion, to which indeed not only England, but the whole Christian universe, are indebted for whatsoever in them is deserving of commendation;—society its civilization; the public their morals; the Christian his virtues;—the religion, which, wheresoever it was propagated, checked the tide of vice, and established the reign of piety. It is the religion, which commands the rich to feed the poor, and the

poor to respect the rich ;—the religion, which from the treasures of its boundless charity, supplies helps for every want, and consolations for every grief ;—the religion, which forbids the mere thought of sin, but which, at the same time, knows no sin but what it expiates ; because it applies to every sin the infinite merits of a divine Redeemer. In short, it is the religion, which, at once holy, venerable, and sublime, possesses, and dispenses to its members, every possible principle, both of present and future happiness. Such,—notwithstanding all the insults which are daily poured upon it,—is the religion of the Roman Catholic. [See Illustration, L.]

And let him next,—that is, let the Protestant, next, take a view of the Protestant churches. How different and contrasted, is the spectacle, which these exhibit, from that which I have just presented ! Considering these attentively, he will,—if he be devoid of partiality,—feel, that they do not, any one of them, exhibit, or possess, those grand, appropriate, and distinctive features, which mark the true church of Christ. They present no claim to *unity*,—consisting, as they do, of a multitude of sects, all at variance with each other ; or if united, and fixed in any thing, united, and fixed, solely in the habits of instability : no title to *antiquity*,—being, all of them, but the offspring of yesterday : no pretension to *apostolicity*,—their pastors enjoying no mission, except what they have either arrogated to themselves,, derived from the civil power, or bor-

rowed from the people :* not even any shadow of *catholicity*,—composed, as is each sect, of but trifling aggregations, to any one of which it would be pre-

* The established clergy, indeed, maintain, that *they* have inherited the apostolic mission through the medium of their Catholic predecessors. But, the good sense of the reader will, I conceive, feel the weakness of this pretension, by making merely the following supposition :—Suppose his present Majesty, induced by policy, or because he believed no longer in the thirty-nine articles,—thought proper, for these reasons, to displace from their sees the present bench of bishops, and to remove from their livings the present body of the inferior clergy,—substituting, at the same time, in their room, a set of men of some different sect,—men of a quite contrary faith, and of opposite principles,—for example, a set of Independents, or Baptists, or Quakers, &c.,—could, I ask,—could such men be reasonably considered, as the proper, and canonical successors of the former; the lawful heirs of their presumed or real prerogatives ; and the associates of their character ? I am sure, that candour, and wisdom, would say,—*No*. Well, and yet such precisely as this is the nature of the claim, which the present established clergy now possess to the alleged title of having inherited the divine, and apostolical delegation from the hands, or through the medium, of their Catholic predecessors. Prompted solely by policy, Elizabeth thought proper to change her religion. She, therefore, in the omnipotence of her power, at once unceremoniously discarded, and ignominiously kicked out, both from their sees and livings, the whole body of the Catholic clergy: and in their room she substituted a new order of believers,—men of a religion directly opposite to that of their predecessors. Such is the process, and such the title, to which the present established hierarchy owe their pastoral delegation. The case is parallel to the above supposed one. Whence, if the reader admit the accuracy of the inference, which I have conceived his good sense would deduce from that,—then should he also acknowledge the justice of a similar conclusion from the

posterous to attach the notion of universality: no well-established right even to the attribute of *sanctity*,—for, not only were their early founders a set of men notorious for their violences, and excesses; and who discarded from their respective institutions every rule almost, or form, of discipline, that is distressing to human self-love;—but it is, moreover, true, that, pious, and charitable, and excellent, as are, and have been always, considerable multitudes of their members,—yet, seldom does, or ever did, the piety, and the virtues, even of these individuals, exceed the measure of strict morality, and the order of nice decorum,—seldom indeed resembling that austere and rigid sanctity, which marked the conduct of the saints. Such are the churches, or the sects, of Protestantism; not exhibiting, in their various features, *any one* of those recommendations, which have been laid down by the divine wisdom, as the essential appendages, and distinctive marks, of the true religion. [See Illustration, M.]

Wherefore, I conclude: and it shall be, with those same observations, with which I have ushered in this treatise.—There is no science, that is half so important, as the knowledge of the true religion;—no benefit, that is so valuable, as the happiness of being united to it. The most substantial consolation

latter. To me, at least, the pretension of founding the alleged apostolical delegation of the established clergy upon the divine commission of their Catholic predecessors, has always appeared,—though an artful,—an inexplicable *fable*.

of the pious and virtuous Christian is founded upon the wise conviction, that he does really enjoy this blessing:—because it is the established principle of his salvation. Whence, this consequence is manifest, —that, whensoever any individual does not possess this conviction, it is his strictest duty to labour to acquire it. His everlasting interests are here at stake. For these reasons, then, let the Protestant endeavour seriously,—as, by his own maxims, he is strictly bound to do,—let him endeavour seriously to obtain this blessed assurance.* Let him, for this

*It is easy to understand, how the great herd of society,—the ignorant, the indolent, the dissipated, &c.—reconcile themselves to live on securely, and without any feelings of apprehension, under any possible form of faith in which the accident of birth may have chanced to place them. Neither is there any difficulty in conceiving, how men are, too naturally, induced to cherish that order of religion whose profession is favourable, or to reject that which is unfavourable, to their worldly interests:—as, in like manner, again, we comprehend, at once, how they willingly admit those systems which are pleasing, and condemn those which are painful, to their self-love. All this is very intelligible: and it is by these principles that we account for the zeal with which the established clergy defend their own church, and for the rancour with which they assail and combat ours;—for the ardour, with which the latitudinarian, and the sensualist, assert the privileges, and the wide liberty, of the Reformation: and for the aversion which they entertain for the severe maxims, and restraining practices, of Catholicity. "Facile crediture quod amatur."

The only circumstance which, in all this momentous business, appears unintelligible, at least to me, is this: how it is possible that any *consistent* Protestant,—that is, any Protestant, who has framed his creed by *principle*, by the essential rules of his

purpose, compare impartially, as I have just now suggested, the marks of the Catholic church with the features of the Protestant societies,—the unity, the antiquity, the diffusion, &c. of the former, with the confusion, the novelty, the contractedness, &c. of the latter. Let him, too,—impressed with correct notions of the nature of Christian *faith*,—which, in order to be real, ought essentially to be steady, and unchangeable,—let him, thus impressed, put to himself, and to his good sense, this question,—whether he can indeed reasonably conceive, that the divine gift ought not, therefore, to repose upon something better,--upon some surer and stronger foundation, than that feeble, and tottering, thing,

religion, by the process of examination, and the suggestions of his own judgment, (for this alone is *consistent* Protestantism) can really, and without any feelings of distrust, consider such a system true ;—can, with any thing like ordinary prudence, look upon it as divine, or as a wise foundation of his future happiness. Having formed his belief in this manner, he must, of course, feel, that it is a system peculiar to himself; and which, in all probability, not an individual in life would admit, besides himself. At all events, he must be sensible, that multitudes of men, far wiser, and more learned, than he is, not only do not believe such code, but believe, in many regards, precisely the reverse. Whilst, again, he knows, that a long series of ages past, as well as a long list of enlightened nations, have always, and every where, professed a faith very different indeed from his. Under these circumstances, if he possess any slender share of humility or prudence, he cannot but be aware that, in all probability at least, he is mistaken; and that he is far more likely to be in the wrong than in the right. He *must*, I conceive, *necessarily doubt*. If he do not, I can only say, he is one of the most presumptuous of human beings.

called "human reason,"—that principle, which is the source of all those errors, and profane opinions, which both vilify religion, and disturb the harmony of social life. Feeling, how liable he is to be mistaken, even in relation to subjects the most natural and obvious,—he ought, hence, to be still more sensible of his inability to comprehend, and penetrate, the sublime and mysterious doctrines of revelation. Wherefore, let him lend an ear to the voice of the common Shepherd, calling to his forlorn and wandering sheep, and inviting them to re-enter once more into the common fold. Diffident in himself, and in his own opinions, let him seriously consider, whether it be not better,—whether it do not appear to him an act of prudence,—to respect the authority *of the universal church*, rather than his own private sentiments: of that church, which was so long the asylum of the saints, and the school of Christian wisdom; of that church, to whose pastors Christ has said—"Go, teach all nations; and behold I am with you, all days, to the end of the world;"—and whom, therefore, he has commanded us to hear and obey, even as we should hear and obey himself. Considering these, and such like circumstances, with candor, he cannot well help being induced, at all events, to pause. He will even be engaged to feel a kind of envy of the calm tranquillity of the Catholic, who, instead of being "driven about by every wind of doctrine," reposes under the shade of his immortal sanctuary, thus powerfully recommended,—secure, and undisturbed,—no

doubts to alarm his piety, no apprehensions to move, or distress, the constancy of his convictions. "La religion Catholique," says Térasson, "est une religion d'autorité. Et par cela même, elle est, seule, une religion de certitude, et de tranquillité."

If, then, it should so chance, that some prejudiced, but yet piously disposed enemy of our church,—some virtuous Protestant, who is Protestant, only because he was born such, or because he has never reflected seriously upon the momentous subject,—if it should chance, that such individual be induced to read these pages, let me, in this case, exhort him to examine the great question carefully. Examination is what I have written principally to solicit. I have said little else than "Examine." And surely, where there exists a doubt concerning so important an object,—to examine is a palpable obligation. For, neither is any disorder more criminal than obstinacy in error; nor is any belief, according to the principles of Protestantism, *reasonable*, unless it be founded upon conviction, generated *by investigation.*

Whilst, however, I thus recommend examination, let me too at the same time say, that I recommend also to whosoever is so prudent as to undertake the salutary task,—to enter upon it with a mind divested of prejudice, and unbiassed by any worldly considerations; for these, like so many clouds, prevent the rays of truth from beaming upon it. True Christian faith is the fruit of *grace;*—and grace descends only into the heart, that is candid and sin-

cere. To minds, that are agitated by the spirit of contention, or that are obscured by the exhalations of the passions,—every sacred subject appears doubtful, and unsatisfactory. "Sincerum est nisi vas, quodcunque infundis acescit." But above all, it is from *pride* that error chiefly derives its origin. It is this, that forms the great source of those repugnances to obedience; of those desolating doubts; of those numberless misgivings, which tyrannise over reason, and render it unwilling to embrace the truth. God has created us, in order that we may know him; and learn, and love, his ways. But, he has fixed the foundation of our knowledge upon the basis of *humility*. He has established the strongest certitude upon diffidence, and the best security upon the virtue of obedience. If, therefore, it be with these dispositions, that the Protestant is induced to enter upon the examination of our religion, the effect will be, that he will not long remain unacquainted with it. That same Being who has created the immortal sanctuary, has not, of course, concealed it behind an impenetrable veil. He has not, as I have said before, placed millions of his creatures between truth and error, between right and wrong, without furnishing them, at the same time, with the means of distinguishing between them. On the contrary, since he has positively and imperiously commanded, that men *shall* believe, and profess, the true religion, so has he, consistently with such injunction, both in his justice and his mercy, taken care to render the means of discover-

ing the sacred institution even *easy*. Let then the dupe of prejudice and ignorance,—let the individual, who now errs only because it has been his unhappy lot to have been nursed in error,—let these but adopt, and cultivate, the dispositions, which I have just suggested; and the happy discovery,—we have divine assurance for it,—will, ere long,—will, even very soon,—be made. "He that loveth the truth, cometh to the light."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

(A.) page 17.

The Effects of the Reformation.

The Reformation was an event, which inspired society,—or at least, its adherents,—with a new set of feelings, and opinions, upon almost every possible subject. It was a new era, introducing every where a new order of things; rejecting the principle, which had, until then, been the basis, both of Christian faith, and of social harmony; and substituting in its stead the very principle, both of religious, and civil, discord. It was the proclamation of the emancipation of human reason from the fetters and restrictions of authority. It, therefore, produced, —as all revolutions in faith must do, when they become general,—a variety of revolutions in other regards. It produced a revolution in morals, in the forms of worship, in the order of politics, in the relations of social life, and in literature itself.

It produced a revolution in morals. Unwilling to be ever grossly inconsistent, men are particularly unwilling to be inconsistent in relation to what interests their self-love, and their passions. The consequence, therefore, is, that, as their duties, and obligations, are regulated by their faith,—so, in

proportion as their faith is feeble and imperfect, such also, in like manner, are their systems of morality, and their cultivation of virtue, more or less defective or orderly, imperfect or accurate, precisely as their belief instructs, and animates, them. If, therefore, it be the case, that all kinds of creeds are established, or tolerated, so likewise, of course, will all kinds of morals. The same liberty, which consecrates the belief of all kinds of errors, and opinions, will equally appear to sanction, either the rejection, or the adoption, of all kinds of duties. For, if men are at liberty to deny, or to believe, what they please, why also, they will naturally say, "Why are we not at liberty to act as we please?" The two privileges appear indeed inseparable. Accordingly, such as this was the reasoning, and such as this the state of things, on the occasion of the Reformation. The toleration of every kind of error became at once the source and toleration of every kind of crime. There was not a crime however monstrous, not a disorder however gross, which immense multitudes of the first converts to Protestantism did not, everywhere,—I do not say merely commit,—but ardently defend; and defend moreover by the alleged authority of the Bible itself. Thus Luther himself, with his fellow reformers, allowed, —good-natured men!—the Landgrave of Hesse to keep two wives at the same time. (It is true, they did this for the good of the Reformation!) In short, as Erasmus, and even the very reformers themselves acknowledge, the morality of the Reformation, at

its early periods, was flagrantly detestable. "The Reformation." says Chalmers, "reformed men into vice." But as Erasmus justly remarks—How could the thing well be otherwise? For, to tell men, as Luther and the Reformers did,—to tell the young, the ignorant, and the profligate,—that good works are of no avail; that there is no liberty in the human will; that the Pope is antichrist; that bishops and priests are but phantoms and evil spirits; that the doctrines of men are heresies, and the decrees of the church but acts of tyranny,—in short, that faith alone is sufficient for all the purposes and securities of salvation,—to tell them all this,—pressing at the same time the wild and licentious principles upon their minds with all the ardor of zeal, and the fury of declamation,—and yet suppose, that the effects would not be ruinous to morality,—this would be, not only unreasonable, but absurd. Even Luther himself, and his coadjutors, felt, ere long, but too late, the awful and awkward circumstance; and they endeavoured to counteract it by the aid of consistories, the powers of the magistracy, a new set of theoretical principles. However, the effort was made in vain. The tree bore its fruits; and these ruits were licentiousness and vice, in every possible shape of turpitude and deformity.

It produced a revolution in worship.—Revolutions in faith must of course, change the order of religious worship; because worship is but the expression of the dogmas of faith. It is the nature of faith to manifest itself by actions; because faith is the

principle, and foundation, of actions. Hence, therefore, the consequence is, that not only has the Protestant revolution destroyed the ancient forms of Christian worship,—but, as the belief of the Protestants is grounded only upon *opinion*, and as they have set aside the most affecting objects of religious veneration,—so do they entertain very little, or no respect for the awful ceremonies of Christian piety. Their liturgies are, for these reasons, cold, dry, inanimate things,—excluding all those sublime and sensible signs, which are the language of feeling, and the expressions of finely-constructed minds.

It produced a revolution in politics, and in the order of social life.—"For, the rebellion," Dr. Daubeny very justly remarks, "which originates in the church, never fails to terminate in the state."

For some considerable time before the Reformation took place, the peace of society, and the comforts of domestic life, had been regularly advancing to stability, under the auspices of religion, and the influences and inprovements of literature. The acceleration to these blessings had even, for some time before, been rapid. However, the Reformation came: and as it was a revolt against authority, so, in order to give an apparent sanction to its darings, it renewed in its own defence those pagan maxims respecting *power*, which, happily for the peace of mankind, had lain, for many ages past, neglected and unknown. "The political writings of the reformers," says Chalmers, "were what we now reprobate as Jacobinical,—being equally irreconcilable

with the principles of established society, an inconsistent with the pure precepts of the Christian religion." In fact, it was they,—it was the force, and industry, of their incantations, that conjured up from its grave, where it had so long been buried, that demon of mischief, and rebellion, the pretended "rights, and supremacy, of the people." At once, —at the call of the awful spectre,—the spirit of anarchy and independence seized upon the minds of their deluded followers, inflaming their passions, and exciting them to reject all the restraints, both of princely, and magisterial, power. The fanaticism of religious liberty produced, at once, the fanaticism of political licentiousness: and many of the best, and finest, portions of Europe became the prey to the anti-social system. Germany, France, Holland, Switzerland, &c. became deluged with torrents of human blood, and overspread with ruins. Many thrones were made to totter; and some, moreover, fell. In short, the bands, both of public harmony and of private concord, were violently burst asunder. Meanwhile, Luther, Beza, and the whole host of the reforming apostles, by the violence of their writings, and the extravagance of their discourses, urged on the multitude to new acts of rebellion; not only justifying, but even sanctifying their excesses.

I say nothing concerning the political effects of the principles of the Reformation in this country. But we all know well what was their result, when once they had developed themselves, and become the

general feeling. The people, animated by them, now became triumphant, and supreme. All power was theirs: and ere long, law, justice, and the constitution vanished. Force alone, and the bad passions remained behind. The sword of the leveller, and the fury of the fanatic, were every where industriously employed in the destruction of every social eminence: and royalty itself perished upon the scaffold, in the person of the most ill-fated of the ill-fated Stuarts.

Dreadful as are these effects, yet are they, after all, but the natural consequences of the maxims of the Reformation. For, when once it is proclaimed, that "reason is the sole rule of faith, and the will of the public the sole source of power," then does *truth* become no longer any thing, but what flatters inclination; *power*, no longer aught, but what gratifies self-love. It becomes *force*, directed by interest, and regulated by the passions: insomuch that wherever men have adopted the pernicious system, they would infallibly,—if possessed of equal rights, but *unequal* interests,—mutually destroy each other. Such as these precisely were the effects, which we have recently witnessed in the instructive history of the French revolution. The leaders of that storm did nothing more than apply with consistency, and courage, the leading principles of the first reformers. And the natural consequence was, the destruction of religion, and the subversion of social order. The same errors in reality will always, when the occasion offers, produce the same effects.

And should any revolution,—which Heaven avert! —again take place in this nation, and there are too many reasons to awaken apprehension,—it will again be founded, and conducted, upon the leading principles of the Reformation,—the alleged "prerogatives of reason, and the rights of man."

It produced a revolution in literature, and the arts, —Before the Reformation, and ere Luther had appeared to disturb the harmony, both of public and private life, there had long subsisted an ardent spirit for the cultivation of literature, and the polished arts,—a spirit, mild, gentle, liberal, and set off with taste. It was excited, and diffused, by a class of men, who had sought after science amidst the ancient ruins of Greece and Rome; who had studied assiduously the works of the most enlightened nations; and even successfully laboured to imitate them. Every branch of learning had already begun to flourish under their auspices; and assisted by the press, they had diffused abroad a blaze of the purest light. It was from Italy that the beam first parted, and it shed its rays over France, Germany, Spain, and various other nations. From the cultivation of literature to the cultivation of the arts, the passage, or transition, is immediate. So that these had already attained a degree of perfection, above all in Italy, even beyond all the refinements of Modern elegance.

The Reformation came,—and by the violence of its excesses, by its barbarous and harsh disputes, it arrested the progress of every literary improve-

ment. Wheresoever its partisans prevailed, the Muses, as if terrified—and the Genius of the Arts, as if disgusted—fled from their hitherto-beloved retreats, and disappeared. Men now began to attach themselves to little else than the discussions of controversy, and the propagation of a set of dry, and frequently very preposterous, systems. It was to the narrow circle of these subjects, that even the learned now confined themselves; and the war of polemics alone absorbed all the care, and industry, of the reformers. In their zeal to destroy Catholicity, and to establish their own religions, they discarded every thing that is classical, or that is connected with taste and elegance. Melancthon owns, and laments, this circumstance to his friend Camerarius. Indeed, except Melancthon, scarce do we trace a single Protestant, who, for a considerable space of time, possessed either any taste, any love of the arts, or any classical erudition. "Ubicumque regnat Lutheranismus," says Erasmus, "ibi est literarum interitus." The same observation is made by Scaliger: "Lutherani," he says, "Omnium imperitissimi et clamosissimi." Whilst, in like manner, speaking of the aversion which the reformers entertained for the fine arts, Forsythe observes, "The Catholic religion is surely the friend to the fine arts: it rejects nothing that is old or beautiful. But had ancient Rome fallen into the hands of the gloomy Presbyterians, we should now look in vain for the sacred part of its ruins. Their Iconoclastic zeal would have confounded beauty with idolatry,

for the pleasure of demolishing both. They would have levelled the temple, and preached in the barn."

The foregoing reflections apply, of course, to those periods principally, which are immediately connected with the introduction, and establishment, of the Reformation. And certain it is,—no learned man will contest it,—that the revolution of Luther, by narrowing the studies of the public to the mere subjects of controversy, stopped the progress of literature, not only amongst the Protestants, but almost equally amongst the Catholics. "In Germany," says the learned Schmidt, "it was even as much as two centuries before men began to breathe." However, at length, disgusted with tastelsss disputes, tired out with ceaseless wrangling, a few individuals,—a little portion of the learned,—were induced to pause. They felt revive in themselves the long-lost, and extinguished, relish for ancient literature, and ancient elegance; and, ere long, they measured back their steps to the schools of taste, science, and philosophy. To do this, however, was the work of time, of pains, and labour. It was Bacon who led the way. But he did it, not by imitating the reformers, but by doing directly the reverse,—resuming the study of classic elegance, and recalling philosophy from those caverns, to which the tasteless violence of those men had so long condemned her.

(B.) Page 19.

Controversy.

Notwithstanding the utility, and in the case of error, the strict obligation, of religious controversy, —yet are there many Catholics, who, considering the temper of the public in relation to the Catholic religion,—the prejudices and bigotry of the laity, and the illiberality and violence of the clergy,—deem all such discussion, when addressed to these men, as needless, and of no avail. Without entirely adopting such opinion, I am, at the same time, convinced of this; that, owing to one cause or other,—to prejudices, fanaticism, ignorance, indifference, in the great herd of society, and to the apprehension of disturbing the peace of a false conscience in multitudes,—the mere perusal of a Catholic work on the subject of religious controversy, is an event extremely rare. Enumerating some of the causes of this inconsistency, Dr. Doyle makes the following observations:—"There are many reasons why religious controversy cannot contribute to promote the interests of truth, in the present state of this country. The first is, that the state has superseded the church, and became, itself, the depositary of religion,—the framer, the modifier, and the defender, of the politico-religious creed of the nation. The clergy, who, in their character of churchmen, possess no independence, are either a portion of the aris-

tocracy, who rule the empire; or they live by that aristocracy. They obtain, and preserve, their existence, not *dum sese bene gesserint*, but *durante bene placito*. The parliament can, independent of them, change the religion of the land, as Blackstone observes. This powerful body rules every thing,—the church, the army, the navy, &c. It has its thousands, and tens of thousands, prepared to defend its decrees, of whatsoever character or description. And where its code of religion is assailed, all its agents are called into action to defend and justify it. Who will contend with the master of thirty legions?

"Again, this politico-religious creed,—which has been prepared, and enacted, and *amended*, like any other act of parliament,—comprises but a few articles. These articles, as the professing believers and teachers of them tell us, have, for a great part, gone into dissuetude, or undergone a silent reformation: so that, at present, a man may adhere to them, as to a religious creed, without believing all of them, or almost any of them; or he may believe them in a summary way, without believing each of them. Hence arises a freedom, or licentiousness, of judgment in religion,—the parent of numberless sects amongst the weaker-minded, and of irreligion amongst the immoral, and those styled *learned*. But, this freedom, this fanaticism, and irreligion, are diametrically opposed to the creed and practice of true Catholics. Who then can argue against such

numerous and powerful antagonists, with a reasonable prospect of success?

"Next, from the depressed situation of Catholics, and the power, dignity, and influence, of the state, it is clear, that a Catholic, who exposes what he considers the errors of the parliamentary creed, must do so in very measured language,—whilst the well-paid advocates of that creed can indulge, not only with impunity, but with applause, in revilings, and abuse: and misrepresentations, of that religion, which the Catholic, abject and unprotected, vainly labours to defend. It is also worthy of observation, that such is the influence of pride, interest, and worldly feelings, that there are but few of those who read controversial works, and are capable of estimating the force of proof, that would, even though convinced, embrace the Catholic religion."

Such as these are the desponding notions, which the above learned and eloquent prelate entertains, upon the subject of Catholic controversy. I share his opinions in part. But I think, at the same time, that, however unequal, in every worldly point of view, be the terms, on which the Catholic contends with the Protestant,—still, as there are individuals scattered up and down in the walks of life, who love and anxiously seek the truth,—so must the discussion of our tenets, and the exposure of the misrepresentations of our enemies, prove of some service to our cause. In fact, did only a single individual derive benefit from such discussions, this circumstance alone should seem to reward the piety, or repay the benevolence, which undertakes them.

(C.) Page 32.

The principles of Protestantism, the source of Socinianism.

The Catholics had always foretold, that the principles of the Reformation would soon, and infallibly, conduct to Socinianism. "And," as Gibbon remarks, "their predictions are accomplished; and the pillars of revelation are shaken by men, who preserve the name, without the substance, of religion."

Speaking, in like manner, of the adoption of the leading maxim of the Reformation, and of the progress of Socinianism, the French Encyclopedists make the same kind of observations: "The rule of Protestantism," they say, "once adopted, it is impossible to know, where the mind will stop." "Il est certain," they add, "que les plus sages, les plus savans, et les plus éclairés d'entre les Protestans se sont depuis quelque tems considérablement rapprochés des dogmes des Antitrinitaires. Ajoutez à cela le tolérantisme... et vous aurez la vraie cause des progrès rapides que le Socinianisme a fait, de nos jours; des racines profondes, qu'il a jetées dans la plupart des esprits,—racines dont les ramifications, se developpant et s'étendant continuellement, ne peuvent pas manquer de faire, bientôt, du Protestantisme en général, un Socinianisme parfait, qui absorbera peu à peu tous les différens systêmes de ces errans; et qui sera un centre commun de cor-

respondance, où toutes leurs hypothèses, jusqu'alors isolées et incohérentes, viendront se réunir, et se perdre, si j'ose m'exprimer ainsi, comme les élémens primitifs des corps, dans le systême universel de la nature, le sentiment particulier du *Soi*, pour former, par leur copulation universelle, la conscience du *Tout*."

"The greatest benefit," says the candid and honest Nightingale, "derived to religion by the efforts of the reformers, is that doctrine, which they so often disallowed to others, but which they found so convenient to themselves, of *acknowledging the unrestrained right of private judgment in matters of faith.* And there is little risk in asserting, that, whoever proposes any contrary terms or articles of union, as necessary to be admitted, violates one of the leading and fundamental principles of the Protestant Reformation. But this would lead to downright Socinianism, as the Catholics charge upon us. May be so. The charge is not without foundation, notwithstanding what some excellent Protestants have written upon the subject. This dreadful consequence may follow. It is a lamentable case. But there is no way to prevent it, while you allow the principle. You may issue your orders of synods, convocations, conferences, and acts of uniformity; —you may enlarge, or curtail, the thirty-nine articles;—you may even pronounce the sentence of God's wrath and damnation, against heretics and schismatics: so long as you admit that groundwork of the Reformation,—*the right of private judgment*,—

though you spend your strength in fulminations, and your skill in devising new terms of salvation, you will only be laughed at by the discerning Christian, as inconsistent and intolerant."

Accordingly, it is a fact, which no well-informed Protestant will deny, that the Socinians, in every Protestant country, form the largest portions of the Protestant communities *amongst the learned:*—God thus permitting great geniuses, very frequently, to combat his religion, in order to show, that his wisdom is not the wisdom of this world. It is the case, I have shown by the attestations of Protestant writers, amongst the reformed clergy in Germany, in Switzerland, and France: it is so very generally amongst the Protestant clergy, both in this country, in Scotland, and in Ireland. "In this country," says Gibbon, "the doctrine of the Protestant church is now far removed from the knowledge and belief of its members; and the articles of their faith are subscribed by the clergy with a *sigh or a smile.*"—"In Scotland," says O'Driscol, "the Presbyterian church is reported to have lapsed into Socinianism." "The synod of Antrim," he adds, speaking of Ireland, "is said to be openly, and professedly, of this faith: and it is stated, that there are few of its churches which are not infected." All this, as Nightingale remarks, is "lamentable;" but, as he also observes, "there is no way to prevent it," so long as the principle of the Reformation remains.

"For, why," says Dr. Doyle, addressing the members of the established church,—"why, and for

what cause, or by what authority, do you condemn the Arian, or Socinian, or unitarian, because they understand those texts, and such others, as prove the eternity, and divinity, of the Son of God, in a sense different from what you assign them? Have they not, according to your rule, a *right*,—nay, are they not *obliged* to follow the dictate of that judgment, in preference to all authority on earth? And yet, you exclude them from the kingdom of God, because in the exercise of their judgment, or in what you consider the discharge of their duty, they differ in opinion from you. Your opinion of them, if judged of by your own principles, is unjust, uncharitable, and unreasonable. You have divested yourselves of all right to repute any man a heretic, or to censure any man for being a schismatic. You have erased heresy, and schism, from the catalogue of vices; and have said with the false prophet, "Peace, Peace, when there was no peace.'"—*Reply to Dr. Magee.*

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Dr. Burgess's Definition of Protestantism.

"Protestantism is the abjuration of Popery." This definition, although certainly a very strange one in theology, is, after all, perfectly correct. "Protestantism" is not a term, implying any system of faith, or any belief whatsoever. It is a term which has no fixed or determinate signification,—a mere *nomen infinitum*, which means any thing, or

every thing, except "Catholic." It is a term, not expressing faith, but the want of faith. Thus not only the Socinian, the Arian, &c. are Protestants, but the Deist, the Jew, the very Atheist,—since these all protest against Popery,—are just equally real Protestants as are the believers in the thirty-nine articles. Bayle, indeed, a complete infidel, calls himself "the very best of Protestants," because instead of protesting against *certain* articles of Popery, he protested, as he said, against them *all*.

To the above accurate definition of "Protestantism," the venerable prelate adds also the following clause, that "it is the exclusion of Papists from all power ecclesiastical and civil." These, too, are words which, if designed to express the nature of Protestantism, are as grossly illiberal in politics, as the foregoing ones are singular in religion. However, they are not, like the foregoing, descriptive of the necessary or even general character of Protestantism: for, Protestantism does not necessarily, or every where, exclude Catholics from the exercise of civil power. In many Protestant states, the Catholic is, equally with the Protestant, admitted to all the honours, and offices, of the civil governments. The words, therefore, only express, and define, the character of English Protestantism;—of that Protestantism which is the disgrace of our statute books, and the violation of English justice, and English generosity;—of that Protestantism which is dear to bigotry; dear to such men as Dr. Bur-

gess; and fondly cherished by the majority of a narrow-minded host of clergy. "Protestantism is the exclusion of Papists from all power," &c. But why, if the "Papist" be loyal; if he be a good subject; faithful to his king; fighting all the battles of his country; obeying all its laws, and supporting all its burdens;—why, then, should he be excluded, any more than any other subject, from the exercise of civil power? The fact even is, that they loyalty of the Catholic is more forcibly secured to the state by the principles of his religion, than is that of any Protestant sect whatsoever. "The faith of the Catholic," says an eloquent Protestant writer,—Reid,—"binds him to obedience so severe, that some would call it *blind*." Yes, but he believes, it is answered, in transubstantiation; and reveres the saints. Well, and what is there then,—I ask it in the name of common sense,—what is there in the belief of transubstantiation, or in the veneration of the saints, that can possible unfit the Catholic for the exercise of civil power? His faith, in relation to these objects, should even appear to render him the fitter for it; because as they are the nurses of piety, and exalted virtue, so they contribute to make him more faithful, and conscientious, in the discharge both of every public, and every private, duty.

Speaking of the intolerance of this country, the same author, whom I have just cited, says, "We cannot but observe, how much this kingdom is behind all other nations of the world, regarding religion. Upon this head, Great Britain has obstinate-

ly adhered to the errors of antiquity. It was her high destiny to lead the nations in the path of civil and religious liberty: but they have now passed beyond her; and she is in the rear of her pupils. England is now the hindmost of the nations."

In relation to our penal laws against Popery, as they existed but a few days past, there is certainly nothing,—nothing even in the codes of the pagan, persecutors,—that was half so horrible, and distressing. "They were laws," says the candid O'Driscol, "that sought their object through every variety of moral turpitude; which offered premiums for the blackest perfidy, and rewards for the basest passions; which tempted the son, or brother, to the plunder of his parent, or kinsman, and led him to perdition with a bribe. They polluted the sanctity of private life; and tore asunder all the charities of kindred. It was made penal to teach the rudiments of knowledge; and reading and writing were condemned, as incompatible with the Protestant religion. They took away the means of instruction, that the people in their ignorance might not know their rights. They offered a bounty for ingratitude, and crime. And having done this, they then slandered and stigmatised the sufferers for their ignorance, and brutality. The penal code was more cruel and detestable, because more cold and calculating, than the massacre of St. Bartholomew, or the slaughter of the Waldenses, or the more dignified barbarity of the Inquisition. It surrounded its victims, every where, with a net of cruelty; set a brand upon him

which disgraced him in public and in private; consumed his property, destroyed his comforts, and visited him with ruin. It met him in all his dealings with his neighbours; in the bosom of his family; in the management of his property. It pursued him with a teazing and relentless persecution,—in court, in parliament, in his own household, on the highway; preserving his life, only to make it unsupportable. If the penal laws had been rigidly executed, society could not have subsisted.

"It is a mistake, however, to imagine, that the penal laws were never executed in their utmost severity, and barbarity. They were, frequently. And we could fill our paper with the details of the most hideous enormities, perpetrated under the authority of these laws. We could present a phantasmagoria of hunted priests, and ruined families,—wretches, wailing for their lost subsistence, or expiring in agony. We could exhibit the profaned and polluted altar, surrounded by the tortured victims of persecution."

"I have read," says Doyle, "of the persecutions of Nero, Domitian, Genseric, and Attila, with all the barbarities of the sixteenth century. I have compared them with those, inflicted on my own country: and I protest to God, that the latter, in my opinion, have exceeded in duration, in extent, and intensity, all that has ever been endured by mankind for justice sake." Such too as this is the opinion of Dr. Johnson, as well as of several other writers whom I could cite. Dr. Johnson declares, that

there is really nothing, in all the ten persecutions of the early Christians, that exceeds the barbarity with which this country has treated its Catholic subjects. Whence, speaking of our laws against Popery, Mr. Burke says of them,—"Never did any thing more savage proceed from the perverted ingenuity of man."

It is, however, true, that some of these laws have recently been done away. Yes, but it is also equally true, that many of them still remain in force,—leaving England, as Reid remarks, "the hindmost of nations," in regard to liberality. For, although Protestant security is every where established by Catholic courage, and defended at the expense of Catholic blood;—although the greatness, and prosperity, of the country are made to repose upon Catholic loyalty; yet are we, still, an insulted, persecuted, and deeply injured, body,—still treated as slaves in the midst of freemen. But, have we not, then, received any rewards for our sacrifices, any remuneration for our loyalty? Yes, we have: and we are grateful for them. Well, and what are they? Why, not so much, after all, any real benefits conferred upon us, as certain heavy injustices not inflicted;—not so much any positive good, as the suspension of certain positive evils;—that is, in fact, we are rewarded, because, we are not now, like our ancestors, hanged, fined, or imprisoned, because we profess the truth. And yet, I believe, after all, that there are still immense multitudes in this country, who repine at our few advantages; and who, as

Moore observes, "still sigh after the good old penal times,—considering liberality, and justice, to Catholics, as acts of degeneracy from their ancestors." I think I could myself name several,—even amongst its clergy,—to whom this observation might be applied most justly. But, at all events, the spirit which is now displaying itself amongst a large portion of the established clergy, in their Orange and Brunswick clubs, attests the accuracy of the remark but too strikingly, and too unhappily.*

*Such, indeed, is the persecuting spirit of these men, that it has excited the disgust, and called forth the severest reprehensions, of a multitude of Protestants themselves,—of nearly all who, in the best walks of society, are liberal, enlightened, and humane. Thus, speaking of them,—as well as of the assemblages which crowd around them,—Mr. Bushe, but the other day, describes them in the following language: "Whilst the schoolmaster is abroad;—whilst the smith is leaning on his anvil, listening to the politics of the daily press;—whilst all its excitation, and watchfulness, and anxiety, and discontent;—the Caligulas of the pulpit are desirous, that the people (the Irish Catholics) had but one neck, that their monopoly might be decided by a blow. These are the sentiments applauded at their meetings. When these parsons, at their ferocious orgies, remind us, that they have three hundred thousand ready armed, —there are cheers,—loud cheers. When they say,—"Blood,—torrents of blood,—shall be shed,"—there are tumults of applause. But, when it is said, that they are to be driven, not even into Connaught, but into hell,—the very welkin is rent with loud and continued cheering."

Such, too, is the general character of these frightful associations, as it is given by various writers. "The conduct," says the Times, "of these domineering Jacobins is beyond belief and endurance. Blood is in every syllable they utter. Their

"We are weary," says the Earl of Shrewsbury, "of proclaiming our grievances. Suffice it to say, that we are treated with an inhumanity and injus-

single argument is the sword. They never think of meeting a body of Catholics, but to slay them."

"There is not," says O'Driscol, speaking of the same association, "there is not, in any nation, an instance of a more profligate and detestable conspiracy. They may be good Protestants; but they are not Christians."

In reality,—and it is thus, perhaps, that we may best account for the conduct of these dreadful men,—to persecute the Catholic, is, in all probability, regarded by them as a Protestant obligation, or even as an article of Protestant faith. For, such, certainly, as this was long the common system of Protestant theology. "It was the opinion," says M'Crie, "generally entertained among the reformers." Whilst, again, as the Edinburgh reviewers remark, "to persecute the Catholics was long considered as one of the most sacred of Christian duties." By these principles, inherited it may be from their pious ancestors, it is easy to calculate for the persecuting spirit of our present Protestant associations.

I would not, indeed, assert, that the holy and venerable prelate, with whose name I have introduced this illustration, is the heir of the above dreadful doctrines; or that he would rejoice in the re establishment of our ancient sanguinary code. Still, however, considering the man's horror of Popery, and the general spirit of his writings on the subject of our religion, I cannot help suspecting, that such really is the case. He has, too, lately presented another testimony, which would almost seem to prove it. He has lately, in the ardour of his orthodoxy, been publishing a long-neglected treatise of our poet Milton; in which, besides many other illiberal things, he contends, that the Catholic religion ought not to be tolerated, either in public, *or yet in private* The aim of the humane bishop in reprinting the miserable work must, of course, be at least similar to that of the liberal

tice, such as, I hope, clearly proves, (and for the honour of human nature be it spoken,) that our oppressors have neither any knowledge of us, or of our sufferings; of our principles, or of our services. We must look to other causes than a mere love of oppression, and cruelty, in our leaders. It is ignorance and prejudice, faction and interest, which alone can uphold such a system of absurdity, and tyranny. My object, therefore, is to warn the thinking portion of the community from being misled by those false and malignant spirits who are so busy in poisoning the public mind against us;—who dress us up in a hideous garb; and put upon us all sorts of deformities of their own invention, till people believe us to be any thing but what, I trust, we really are. Still, the injustice which we are doomed to suffer, from ignorance and credulity, is that of which we have, perhaps, the most reason to complain, because it is the easiest to rectify. For, while every other species of learning is pursuing a rapid and triumphant career,—whilst the press teems, almost daily, with authenticated expositions of our doctrine,—and whilst well-informed Catholics are to be met with at every corner,—is it not too much to be reduced to the alternative of being, either neglected, as unworthy of attention; or of seeing our

poet in composing it. But, if so, would not his piety deem it a piece of merit again to persecute us? I think so. How fortunate it is, that, with notions of our religion like those of Dr. Burgess, men have not now the power to execute all their wishes!

tenets, and our conduct, studied only in the writings of our adversaries?

"When every other nation in Europe, in which difference of religion exists, has cemented its power, and concentrated the affections of its people, by the most enlarged system of religious toleration, it is certainly most extraordinary that we, who pretend to be the wisest and most liberal of all, should, alone, continue a policy, which divides, instead of uniting;—which irritates, instead of conciliating; and which weakens, where it ought to strengthen. That in England,—that far-famed garden of liberty,—the baneful weed of intolerance should flourish in such rank luxuriance; in England, where a hundred different religions have found their way, and where there is no limit to the intrusion of new ones; —that *one* religion alone should be proscribed, and *that* the mother of the religion of the state, the foundress of all her institutions, and the nurse of all her liberties,—is an enigma which no ingenuity can solve, unless we put it down as the effect of consummate bigotry."

Thus, then, it is, that Dr. Burgess's definition of Protestantism is as illiberal in politics, as it is absurd in theology. It is, indeed, "an enigma," which bigotry only—"consummate bigotry,"—can solve. As for policy,—enlightened policy is founded always upon justice, and moderation. It is neither suspicious, nor unkind. Its very prudence is not that dark, foreboding thing, that watches against dangers, or that trembles at accidents, which merely

may take place. It calculates only upon rational probabilities;—not weighing phantoms, and visions, in the same scale with facts; nor balancing possible disloyalty against manifest and steady loyalty. It is, on the contrary, generous, liberal, and humane. Every system of politics which, above all in these days, is not grounded upon these virtues, is false. These are the objects which form the very first calculation of the prudent legislator. They are the fixed points,—the polar star,—towards which the eye of the enlightened politician is always,—or at least always should be, directed. If, happily, such only as this were the case in our regard, not only would the injustices soon cease, which have so long assailed us, but our complete emancipation would take place to-morrow.

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The Difficulties, &c. of the Scriptures.

"Disputes," says St. Austin, "must be endless, where men appeal only to the Scriptures to decide them. Each party may grant and deny, and deny and grant, for ever. The victory, in all such contests, must always continue doubtful: and the only effect will be, that each side will claim it equally, and remain the more obstinately fixed, each, in their own opinions. And what, therefore, is the method, which, in such case as this, men properly ought to follow? Why, they should seek out the persons, to whose custody the depositum of faith has been in-

trusted,—the men, to whom the Scriptures themselves belong,—the men, from whom, and by whom, Christianity has come down to us. It is only from them, that we shall have, both the true Scriptures, and the true sense of the Scriptures. In Comment. 1mo.

"In order," says Claude (in his Defence of the Reformation,) "in order to understand the Scriptures, there is, I candidly acknowledge it, a great many obstacles to be removed; a great many difficulties to be overcome. The terms are to be weighed exactly; the style is to be examined; the reasonings are to be considered; similar expressions to be compared; dissimilar passages attentively looked into; the sense of obscure and ambiguous sentences penetrated; the connexions of the discourse attended to, as it refers to such and such an object, or to such and such an end. For these purposes, it is necessary to know, how to distinguish the apocryphal from the canonical books;—necessary to understand the original languages, in order to be able to judge of the accuracy of the translations—necessary, moreover, to consult the works of interpreters. All this, no doubt, requires much care, much study, and application: insomuch that to do it well, the whole life of man is not too long. Nay, I will even add,—it is too short; and that all human strength is too feeble to understand the sacred volumes, which are an infinite source of mysteries, and heavenly truths."

Such as this is the opinion of one of the most distinguished defenders of the cause of Protestantism,

in a work composed professedly and directly in its defence. Whence also, in his treatise on the "True System of Religion," he acknowledges, that the method of finding out the truth by the private examination of the Scriptures, is "absurd, ridiculous, impossible, and wholly exceeding the capacities of the public."

I could cite a multitude of passages similar to those of Claude, extracted from the works of many, both of our own, and of foreign, Protestant writers, —all admitting, that the circumstance of wisely understanding the sacred Scriptures is far beyond the reach, and completely removed from the means, and abilities, of mankind in general. Thus, for example, Dr. Barrow, in his Bampton Lecture, makes the following just observations: "It is not possible," he says, "to prove, that in language the most familiar to us, any given number of interpreters annex precisely the same idea to the same simple term. How differently, then, may different men be reasonably expected to understand the general and comprehensive principles of morality, or the mysterious doctrines of theology, contained in the Christian revelation! The truths of our religion are conveyed to us in the language of a distant age, and country; and consequently, by translations only, can they be known to the great majority of mankind. They are expressed in terms, alluding to the customs and manners of the times, to peculiar modes of thinking and acting, now known by little else than the allusions themselves. They are to be collected from

a variety of treatises, historical, prophetic, moral, and religious, written by different authors, at very distant periods of time. No wonder, then, that so many theological controversies have begun or ended in mere dispute about the meaning of words. No wonder that the upright, and the pious, and even the learned, should have been led by mistaken interpretations to hold mistaken doctrines."

In like manner the present Bishop of Durham, Dr. Van Mildert, in his Bampton Lecture, writes thus: "Does not every sect, or denomination, of Christians maintain, that it has the sanction of Scripture for its creed? And how could this be, if some did not ground their interpretations of it upon erroneous principles? The fact speaks for itself; and shows, that whatever some may dream of the facility of extracting from the Scriptures a correct and coherent system of divine truth, this is hardly to be effected, without such qualifications and attainments, as we shall in vain look for among a considerable portion of mankind. A general knowledge of the principles of grammar and criticism, and an acquaintance with the idioms of language in which any work is written, are, in every instance, indispensable. Commentators, harmonists, philologists, all must be called in to enable us thoroughly to analyse or to combine, rightly to divide or to compare, spiritual truths. To neglect these, is virtually to neglect the means of profiting by the Bible."

The language of Bishop Mant, in his Bampton Lecture, is similar to the above. "Whilst," he

says, "whilst we regard the Scriptures, as the only infallible criterion of sound doctrine, I should add a salutary caution in the use of them. It is the duty of every Christian, and it is the privilege of every Protestant, to search the Scriptures. But it is not every man who is duly qualified to explain them to advantage. 'Scripture,' said a very learned man (Hales), 'is given to all to learn; but to interpret only to few.' In order to understand the Scriptures, not only much zeal and diligence are necessary, but also much study in preparatory exercises; much care in comparing them; much judgment in applying them; much discrimination in distinguishing between objects of a limited and those of a universal import; much humility and sobriety of mind in explaining the more mysterious points of doctrine; and especially a freedom from all prepossession."

These few concessions, as well as the reasons appended to them, ought, I conceive, to appear sufficient to convince any sober-minded individual, that the alleged privilege of allowing all men to interpret the divine volume,—although the very basis of Protestantism,—is, after all, an absolute absurdity. Even the very reformers themselves,—Luther, Calvin, and many of their learned coadjutors, acknowledge frequently even their inability to understand the sacred text; and on account of its obscurity, rejected from *their* new canon several books, which had hitherto been regarded as inspired. However, it was the circumstance of laying open the Bible to *all*, and of bidding *all* to interpret it,—it was this

circumstance, which, by flattering the public, and creating confusion,—contributed, perhaps beyond any other cause, to the progress and establishment of the Reformation.

The errors, indeed, and the confusion, which at once resulted from the "glorious privilege,"—although thus beneficial to that great revolution,—were at the same time such as ought to have induced piety to believe, that it could not well be considered as the gift, and dictate, of the eternal wisdom. Its effects were early foreseen, and lamented, by its very authors. Hence that emphatic exclamation, already cited, of Melancthon: "Good God! what a tragedy have we not prepared for posterity!" Speaking of some of those effects, the learned Walton, in the preface to his Polyglot, observes: "Aristarchus once could hardly find seven wise men in Greece. But, amongst Protestants, with difficulty could you find as many fools. All Protestants are doctors; all divinely learned. The veriest idiot, or mechanic, preaches up his dreams, as the pure word of God. The abysses of hell seem to have been opened; and emitting a smoke, have darkened the heavens, and taken from the stars their light. The locusts, armed with stings, swarm every where;—an immense multitude of sects, and heretics, reviving old errors, and inventing monstrous ones of their own. These have filled our cities, villages, camps, houses; nay, our churches too, and our pulpits: and they lead the poor deluded people after them to the pit of perdition."

In like manner, speaking of the earlier periods of the Reformation, Southey remarks, "The Bible gave occasion for evil. Presumptuous and ignorant people no sooner read, than they took upon themselves to expound it. They interrupted the church-service by thus holding forth; discussed points of Scripture in ale-houses, and taverns; quarrelled over them, &c. Those insane opinions were also abroad, which struck at the root of all authority, civil and ecclesiastical; and of all social order. Because the Bible was in English, they believed it was now on a level with their capacities, and that in all parts and points they understood it." Such as these were the fruits which, at the earlier periods of the Protestant revolution, grew out of the presumed right which men, all possess of interpreting the sacred volume.

At present, if the mischiefs arising from this alleged prerogative be less gross, and disorderly,—less hostile to the peace and order of social life, than they were formerly,—still they are even now, in the eyes of Christian piety, truly awful, and deplorable;—alike, as at the times just alluded to, opposed to the dictates of truth, and repugnant to the maxims of wise religion. We see, every where around us, as I have said so often, even amongst the better-instructed readers of the Bible, a scene of errors and confusion, of folly and fanaticism;—errors in as many forms almost, as there are varieties in the human character. Indeed, as many of the Protestant writers themselves attest and lament, the divine

book is so perverted, as to be rendered the very instrument, not only of error and dissension, but of irreligion and impiety. "Instead of searching the Scriptures," say the writers of the British Critic, "as a rule of faith and conduct, the fashion of the present day is, to make them a pretence for dissension. In those dissensions, every heresy will have its advocate. And with whatever rapidity one false doctrine spreads, with the same rapidity, when the tide turns, will its opposite error run in."—"To such an extent," says Archdeacon Cambridge, "has the diabolical practice of spreading irreligion been carried, that it is well known, evening schools are established, in which both children and adults are instructed in reading: and the Bible is put into their hands for the express purpose of perverting the divine truths it unfolds; and training them to treat its contents with ridicule, and contempt." (Charge.)

Wherefore, very forcibly impressed with a sense of the many evils, which flow from the unlimited circulation of the sacred volume, and from the "glorious" right, which every Protestant enjoys, of interpreting it by the dictates of his own understanding, —impressed with these inconveniences, there have always been,—and there are still,—many Protestant writers, who,—with more prudence and good sense, than consistency,—have severely condemned the twofold privilege. "The unrestricted liberty of Protestants," says Archbishop Bramhall, "of reading the Bible, is more injurious to religion than the restraints of the Catholics." Selden even de-

clares, that "the two words, 'Search the Scriptures,' have undone the world." The language at present of several of the members of the established church is hardly less impressive. They own, that the general and indiscriminate reading of the Bible has proved, not only ruinous to faith, but destructive to public morals. Dr. Maltby contends, that out of the sixty-six sacred books, which form the canon of the national church,—only seven of the Old, and eleven of the New, Testament are fit for general circulation. In reality, why should it be supposed, that men understand the Bible,—the most obscure of all books,—better than they do any other work? And if they do not understand,—why then invite,—nay, even command them to explain it? Error, doubt, and incredulity, must be the necessary results of so wide and strange a privilege. "The Socinians," says the British Critic, "are so convinced, that the tendency of the Bible society is hostile to the church, that they are willing, even though it circulates the authorised version of the Scriptures, to give it their support. This they consider a temporary sacrifice, made to obtain the greater object,—the ruin of the establishment, by the dividing processes of the Bible Society." Such too as these are the sentiments expressed by Dr. Norris, in his letter to Lord Liverpool: "We conscientiously believe the Bible Society to be an institution fraught with danger, not only to our own church, but to the best interests of Christian truth, and unity, throughout the world." Thus, it is admitted, that the prin-

ciple, which alone constitutes the religion of the Protestant, (for "the Bible, and the Bible only," it is triumphantly urged, "is the religion of the Protestant,") constitutes, at the same time, the *irreligion* of every sect of heresy, and the basis of the impiety of the schools of incredulity.

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The Bible Society.

Speaking of the conduct, &c. of this Society, Dr. Doyle makes the following reflections on it:—"The types sweat, the press teems, vessels are freighted, for it. And all to no purpose. It derives an immense trade; profitable, no doubt, to many, in Bibles, and missionaries. It squanders hundreds of thousands upon expeditions more senseless than the most foolish of Sir Walter Raleigh's; and, like that pirate, it repays its dupes with reports of what never had any existence. It would be endless to recount the delusions which are practised by the missionaries in this regard. . .Thus it is, that the English people are gulled out of their money. Thus it is, that fortunes are made for the printers, and booksellers, and itinerant charlatans. As to the notable scheme of the Irish Bible,—*that* is too absurd to need exposure. But, it answers the purpose of cheats and hypocrites.

"We, never yet, have been furnished with a proof, that these societies have converted a single tribe, or a people, or a nation, to the faith:—no, not one.

And what is more,—it is impossible they should. They may make many hypocrites, and cause thousands, who are already tossed about by every wind of doctrine, to exchange one error for another. They may count many converts, such as a certain distinguished nobleman, on their lists; and induce many old maids to exchange their monkeys, or lapdogs, for the Bible; but, it is quite impossible, they should ever propagate the kingdom of God upon the earth.

"I recollect, that, when the Chartar of the East-India Company was last renewed, Warren Hastings gave in evidence before a committee of the House of Commons, that, during his government in the East, Catholic missionaries alone made converts... I have conversed with several respectable and *disinterested* persons who had spent many years in India; and from all the information, I have been able to collect from these various sources, I am convinced, that the state of the missions in that country is substantially the same as it was in the time of Warren Hastings. The only converts made by the missionary Societies, (for, the Bibles have made none at all,) are some few Hindoos who had lost their caste, and who listen for hire to the preaching of those, who pay them.

"Then, as to their labours in Christian countries,—they tell us of Russia, and of their immense manufactory in that country; and yet, I doubt whether they have converted a single Cossack, or boor. And if they did, they would only take them from a schismatical church, to no church at all.

In Germany, and Switzerland, amongst the Protestant churches, they are quite at home. Yes, in these countries, where that infidelity, which Toland, Tyndal, and Bolingbroke, first introduced from England to the continent, and which was propagated with such malignant perseverance by their disciple Bayle, competes with a frightful fanaticism, so that one knows not, which of them will gain the ascendency.

"In France, these Societies are abetted only by the Calvinists, and the infidels. And it is a fact, of which I have been informed by a gentleman, of whose veracity and knowledge of the matter I can have no doubt, that the Bible has been circulated in that country by the very men, who lately published cheap editions of Rousseau's Emile, and of the Pucelle D'Orleans, for the purpose of corrupting youth.

"Wherever the reader of the Bible is not regulated by a salutary discipline such is ours, it leads a great portion of the people necessarily to fanaticism, or to infidelity. The French infidels know this well; and hence their alliance with the Bible Societies.

"But, as to the progress of these societies amongst Catholics, whether in France, or in any other country on the continent, it is precisely the same as on the banks of the Shannon, or the hills of Killarney. And all they state to the contrary is a collection of falsehood, transmitted home, or manufactured here,

by men, who fare sumptuously every day on the fruit of these their unhallowed labours.

"As a general conclusion from the foregoing observations, it seems to me,—1st, That these societies are embarked in propagating an intolerable error, by seeking to introduce the indiscriminate perusal of the sacred Scriptures, without note or comment; and substituting a chaos of undisciplined opinion, for the wisdom, and order, and power, of the church of God;—2dly, It appears to me, that their labours, so far from being in accordance with the spirit of the Christian religion, are calculated to subvert it, and to plant in its room fanaticism, or infidelity,—3dly, I am clearly of opinion, that these labours have been and must continue fruitless, whether in converting infidels, or in disturbing Catholicy; whilst they have increased the confusion of the Protestant churches, and may ultimately subvert them altogether."

(G.) Page 75.

Protestant Inconsistencies, in relation to Authority.

If we look at all the various organised establishments of the Reformation, we shall find, that there is *not one* amongst them all, that has not systematically violated its own leading maxims, by the imposition of oaths, subscriptions, tests, creeds, excommunications, statutes, &c. Thus the Church of England allows no one to hold a living, who has not first subscribed, with a declaration of "unfeign-

ed assent," the thirty-nine articles; acknowledging all these to be "agreeable to the word of God." In her canons,—which her clergy, at their ordination, swear they will observe,—it is decreed, that all dissenters "be ipso facto excommunicated;"—that all Popish recusants "be ipso facto excommunicated;"—that whoever denies the King's supremacy, "be ipso facto excommunicated;"—that whoever affirms, that the Church of England is not a true and apostolic church, "is ipso facto excommunicated;"—that whoever asserts, that the worship of the Church of England is superstitious, "is ipso facto excommunicated;" that whoever affirms, that the government of the Church of England is repugnant to the word of God, "is ipso facto excommunicated;" that whoever shall affirm, that its mode of consecration is repugnant to the word of God, "be ipso facto excommunicated;" that whoever shall separate himself from the communion of the Church of England "is ipso facto excommunicated;" that whoever shall set up a new form of worship "is ipso facto excommunicated." Such as these are some of the leading canons of the English Church. They, thus, place under the ban of excommunication, all sects, and descriptions of persons, who are not within the pale of that establishment. So that its clergy, and real members, must,—if they judge consistently with those strange and astonishing instruments,—consider all persons, who are under that ban, as being, at the same time, under the sentence of reprobation, and unfit also for Christian

burial: for, such as these are the alleged effect, and punishment, of excommunication. Considering, therefore, these awful consequences, and remonstrating against them, the Presbyterians, in 1660, made this very just observation on them,—that "the composers of them must maintain themselves to be infallible, or else they must design to tyrannise over men's consciences."

In like manner, if we look at the conduct of the French Protestant churches, we find there again the same kind of inconsistencies. In the synod of Foi, anno 1578, we even find, that the fathers of that assembly agreed to allow "four of their ministers to settle, and *conclude*, all the points of faith that were to be believed." In the synod of Vitré, anno 1617, its members obliged all the provinces "to believe, and in all things to obey, their decisions." In 1618, the Independents having maintained, that each church should be governed by its own laws, so that men snould not be obliged to submit to the authority of synods, or the orders of conferences, for the regulation of their faith,—the synod of Charenton, upon this, solemnly declared,—"that such system is injurious to the church; that it opens the door to extravagant opinions; that if it were adopted, there would be as many religions as there are parishes." Under the head of "discipline," the same French churches decreed, that "the national synod, by the word of God, has the power of making *final* decisions, to which, if men refuse entire obedience, they shall be excommunicated." I

might cite, as similar to these, the decrees of many other Protestant churches in Germany, Switzerland, Holland, &c.

Now, I will simply ask this question,—What, in all the above conduct, do we trace, but the grossest violation of the genuine principles of the Reformation? What is it, in reality, but acting, as if the authors of such decrees were infallible? By the principles of the Reformation, every individual has the right to interpret the sacred Scriptures; and is the judge and arbiter of his own belief. And if so,—is it not, therefore, an act of tyranny to excommunicate the man, who,—merely acting as he is bound, or at least bidden, to do, and judging for himself,—only follows the suggestions of his own understanding? According to those principles, the Socinian himself, although he believes profanely, yet only believes, as *by those principles*, he is allowed to do, or even should do. He reads, interprets, judges, and determines, for himself. And this is precisely what the rule of Protestantism bids him do. Whence, the Protestant churches that condemn him for his belief, condemn, in reality, their own leading maxims, and are guilty of an act of inconsistency. They declare him free, and yet load him with chains; call him a man, yet treat him as a child; proclaim him a lion, and still mock him as a lamb.

"You have established a system," says Dr. Doyle to the established clergy, "which sanctions heresy, and condemns it; which invites to schism, and punishes it; which tells the believer to hear the

church, and teaches him to prefer his own opinion, however monstrous and absurd, to her most solemn judgments. Why, a church thus constituted, is incoherent, and inconsistent,—a hulk, thrown upon the waters, without helm or compass.

"Doubtless," he continues, "the established church, in excommunicating schismatics and maintainers of conventicles, is very inconsistent and absurd. For, she excommunicates them for doing what she herself has done. She calls them heathens, because they, in the exercise of their judgment, reject her creed, and frame one for themselves; whilst she proclaims to them, that, in doing so, they act agreeably to the will of God; that she can give them no assurance, that her own doctrine is a whit preferable to theirs; and that Christ, and herself, have given them a license to think on religion as it listeth them, and speak in their conventicles as they think. This, no doubt, is excessively inconsistent, and absurd, in the established church. But she is rich, and powerful, and therefore entitled to indulge in all the luxury of absurdity and error.

"If her absurdities are hinted at, she points to her lawn sleeves, her gilded palaces, her trains of equipages, her millions of acres, her tenths of two kingdoms; and in the language of a bloated epicure, says, "You vulgar Cynic, how can I be wrong?" Should he laugh,—as I am sometimes obliged to do, —at her ignorance, her insolence, her pomp, and pride, she opens her armory, more stowed with weapons than a star-chamber, or inquisition: more

ill-savoured than a lady's dressing-room; and lets loose upon him a whole legion of her satellites; having one hand armed with calumny and sophistry, the other filled with newspapers, tracts, pamphlets, reviews, replies, rejoinders, charges, sermons, and speeches. With these, the heathen, or publican, is at once oppressed: and if he learns not to revere the wisdom, and respect the power, of the church, he will at least learn to protect his own person; and to preserve by silence, and submission, under whatsoever injustice or wrong, any property which he may be suffered to possess."

(H.) Page 74.

The Oaths of our Legislators, &c.

There is something, that is hardly less astonishing than it is awful, in the circumstance of the oaths and declarations which, in this country, are required from our senators, magistrates, &c. ere they are allowed to perform the duties of their respective situations. It ought to appear *incredible*, that tests so singular should ever have been proposed in an *enlightened* nation; but *impossible*, that they should ever have been adopted in a *Christian* one. We have lately, indeed, heard the wisdom and piety of some of our legislators, expressing their repugnance, and lamenting the disgrace, at being compelled to submit to the needless, but still frightful, absurdity.

"The oath, and declaration, taken by Protest-

ants," says Dr. Doyle, "proceed to set forth, that "there is not any transubstantiation of the elements of bread and wine, into the body and blood of Christ, at, or after, the time of the consecration thereof, by any person whatsoever: and that the invocation, or adoration, of the Virgin Mary, or any other saint, and the sacrifice of the Mass, as they are now used in the Church of Rome, are superstitious, and idolatrous."

"This portion of the oath and declaration, though not partaking of any political character, and introduced chiefly through religious spleen, is more painful to a man of an upright conscience, than even the former part: and to read it merely, is sufficient to show, how well it is calculated to suppress peace, and to foment ill-will between members of the same community.

"I shall say nothing of what our church teaches on the subject of transubstantiation. But, I am bold to say, that no man, who reads Doctor Parker's (the Bishop of Oxford) *Reasons for abrogating the Test*, will swear, or declare to God, without pain, that 'he believes, there is not any transubstantiation of the bread and wine, at or after the time of consecration.' But, even admitting that there is not, how can an appeal to Heaven, on such a subject, be justified? Whereas, we should not only suppose, but *know* (and knowledge, according to Locke, implies certainty,) that what we swear is conformable to the truth.

"I have heard, that, when my Lord Grey, and General Thornton, brought forward this subject, it was observed by many members, that the declaration was exceedingly objectionable; but, that it was taken with a certain intention, or in a sense different from that, conveyed by the words which compose it. Now, besides that mental reservations, and equivocations, are not only unworthy of gentlemen, and Christians, but also expressly excluded in the declaration itself,—I cannot conceive, why a form of words, impious, perhaps, in their tenor, dubious in sense, useless and unnecessary as a test of religious faith, but, above all, provokingly offensive, and even insulting, not only to the Catholics of the empire, but to the whole Catholic world,—should, through indolence or bigotry, be let to remain on the statute book. Lord Eldon, or the Bishop of Canterbury, may be able to account for it. But, to a person unacquainted with state secrets, or feeling a reverence for the awful name of God, or being attached to the simplicity of truth,—it is indeed inexplicable.

"The invocation of the saints, and the sacrifice of the Mass, 'superstitious, and idolatrous!' This is repeated annually by every corporation officer throughout the kingdom; and not only by these; but every bishop, every judge, every sheriff, every clergyman, every lawyer, every attorney, every man going into parliament, holding office under the crown, or entering upon almost any legal profession, if he be of the established church,—must de-

clare, upon oath, his belief, that the invocation of the saints, and the sacrifice of the Mass, are 'superstitious, and idolatrous!!' The husband of the Catholic wife, the parent of the Catholic child, if a Protestant of the established church, must do this, or sacrifice his family, and perhaps his fortune, as well as his honours. The public officer, who invites his Catholic friend to dine, or who, in his turn, sits at the board of his heterodox neighbour, must prepare for this social intercourse, by proving, upon oath, his belief, that his host, his guest, his neighbour, his friend, is an *idolater*. And the magistrate who sits on the bench, the judge who dispenses justice, must not,—cannot,—take their seats, until they have sworn, that it is their belief, that their suitors,—that all the Catholics who expect justice in mercy at their hands,—are *idolaters*. If this obligation were imposed upon corporators, and tithe-collectors, it would be quite in character, as their whole life is employed in opposition to the public good: and it might be necessary to steel their hearts against the victims of their oppression. But, to impose such a burden upon liberal, enlightened, and honest men, this is quite intolerable.

"To declare the sacrifice of the Mass to be 'idolatry,' is really absurd, because idolatry is the worship of the creature as God; whereas, at Mass, no Catholic ever worshipped any thing but God. The thought of worshipping the appearance of bread in the consecrated Host, never enters their mind. Their homage is exclusively directed to Christ. We

believe that Christ, though present, is veiled from our eyes; and it is *Him alone*, that we adore; it is *to Him alone*, that we pay our homage; and not to any creature in heaven or upon the earth.

"The case is the same with regard to the invocation,—or as it is called, the 'adoration' of the Virgin, and of the saints. Now, it may be curious to show, that the belief of the Catholic on this subject, —which the Protestant swears to be idolatrous, is—like that on many other subjects, equally reviled—substantially the same as his own.

"Catholics, and Protestants, each, believe, 'in the communion of saints,'—it being an article of our common creed. Thus, all are agreed, that the members of the church on earth and in heaven, are united by charity, or the love of each other. They also agree, that this charity is an active principle, always operating, or desiring to do all the good in it power to the object of its affection. It is again agreed, that the members of the church who are in heaven, see God face to face, &c. And why, therefore, says the Catholic, may they not pray to him for their absent brethren? Were not prayers and supplications for their brethren part of their occupation, whilst in this world? And what is the reason why they cannot pray for them now, as they did whilst on earth? Are they too busy? Is their charity extinguished; or has it relaxed into indifference?" &c.*

* Many of the most distinguished theologians, that adorn the annals of the established church,—men who had seriously

(I.) Page 119.

The general state of Protestantism.

The state of Protestantism in Germany is thus described by a multitude of writers. "It cannot,"

considered the nature of our doctrines,—such men as Sheldon, Taylor, Forbes, Montague, Thorndyke, &c.—declare positively, that, neither in our worship of the Eucharist, nor in our veneration of the saints, is there any thing that merits the reproach of idolatry. They treat the accusation as a calumny, and even as an injury to the established church itself. "In plain terms," says the learned Thorndyke, "we make ourselves schismatics, by grounding our reformation upon this pretext, that the church of Rome is idolatrous. So that should this church declare, that the change which we call "Reformation" is grounded upon this supposition, I must then acknowledge that we are the schismatics. For, the profession of idolatry necessarily signifies utter apostacy from Christianity to paganism." Even the severe and orthodox writers of the British Critic, speaking lately of the question, whether our invocation of the saints be idolatrous or not, very candidly allow, that "there is not any thing of idolatry in it." Hence, again, how frightful are the oaths which solemnly, before God, attest the *certainty* of our idolatry! and how awful and astonishing, still more, the circumstance, that men should take such oaths, completely uninstructed, and uninformed, upon the subject!

The chief reason why the Protestant considers the adoration which we pay to the Eucharist as an act of idolatry, is because the mystery, they contend, contradicts the evidence of the senses. Such as this is even the incessant argument employed by a set of theologians, who, owning the divine omnipotence, and the necessity of mysteries in religion, ought hence to reason better. "The doctrine of transubstantation," says the liberal and learned Mr. Hallam, "does not, as is vulgarly supposed,

says Mr. Jacob, "be denied, nor ought it to be concealed, that many of the German clergy of both sects,—Lutheran and Calvinistic,—had, previously to the late reunion, given up, not only the peculiar doctrines of their respective churches, but even the Christian faith itself; and that to such a degree, that even our avowed Socinians would, by them, be considered as equally credulous with the orthodox clergy." (Tour.)

"The majority of pastors, and professors of divinity, in Germany, for about the last thirty years, have called themselves Rationalists. They are, in other words, decided *Deists.*" (Haldane, Review of the conduct of the Bible Society.)

"In Germany, Protestantism is now a mere negation; for, not even has each sect any common profession whatsoever. The name expresses, not what it believes, but what it disbelieves. It is not, it declares, Catholic; but it refuses to declare what it

contradict the evidence of our senses; since our senses can report nothing as to the unknown being, which the schoolmen denominate *substance;* and which *alone* is the subject of this conversion."

In like manner, comparing together the three great *leading* systems of the Christian world in relation to the Eucharist,—that of the real presence, admitted by the Lutherans and the church of England, that of the Calvinistic societies, and that of the Catholic church,—comparing these three together, the same candid author observes:—"It can hardly fail to strike every *unprejudiced* reader, that, as the Romish tenet of transubstantiation is the *best,* so that of the Calvinists is the worst imagined of the three."—*Constitutional Hist.*

really is,—that is, it presents no positive idea. Once it lived by hatred, and animosity; now, it is dying of indifference. It feels, that by losing the feverish strength which animated it formerly, it is losing its life. Hence, in order to put a good face upon the thing, and in an excess of desperate joy, its pastors have thought proper to celebrate a Secular Feast." (Philomate Civarron.)

"A large portion of the Protestant churches of Germany hailed the principles of Rationalism with delight, and spread with eagerness this purer system of Christianity. It was taught by her divines from the pulpit; by her professors from the chairs. It was addressed to the old, as the exhortation which was to free them from the weight and burden of ancient prejudices and observances; and to the young, as that knowledge which alone could make them truly wise, or send them into life with right and rational views. It need not be added, that the Protestant church of that country is the mere shadow of a name." (Rose, on the state of the Protestant Religion in Germany.)

"In France," says Mr. Haldane, "it may easily be conceived, how unfit the great body of the Protestant ministers must be for their office. Arians, Socinians, Neologists,—of no fixed opinion whatever as respects the Gospel,—they are, in general, blind leaders of the blind." (Review, &c.)

"In Prussia, go almost where you will, it is too well known that the Protestant clergy are in a state

of Neologian darkness,"—(that is, they are mere Deists.) (Id.)

"In Hungary," says the same writer, "the state of religion filled him with sorrow and grief, to behold such a multitude of people, who still bear the name of Protestant Christians—but who are little better than the heathens, either in refined scepticism, or gross superstition. The value of a minister amongst them is rated according to his oratorical powers,—no matter what doctrine he teaches, or what tenets he holds." (Ibid.)

Similar to these are the portraits which he presents of the state of Protestantism in Holland, Sweden, and Denmark. He exhibits Socinianism, incredulity, and a general indifference to all religion, as prevailing every where in these countries, amongst the pastors, professors, and nominal members, of this now degenerated institution.

The description, which not only Mr. Haldane, but a multitude of other writers, have given of the state of the Protestant religion *in this country*, is hardly less afflicting than the preceding. "What," says the above writer, "must the Catholics conclude concerning Protestants, and the cause of the Reformation, when they see, that the name *Protestant Pastor* is sufficient to sanction every heresy; while the doctrines of the Gospel are entirely disregarded? No wonder that they openly declare, that the state of religion amongst Protestants, forms the strongest argument against the Reformation. In *their* church, there are fundamental doctrines retained, of the

highest importance, which if really embraced, will conduct to eternal life. But, the state of the public ministry, in many Protestant churches, is such, that salvation, by means of it, is impossible." (Ibid.)

"In this country," says the late Bishop of Durham, "there is an almost universal lukewarmness, and indifference, respecting the essentials of religion." (Charge.)

"The characteristics of the present times are, confessedly, incredulity, and an unprecedented indifference to the religion of Christ." (Dr. Tomline, Charge.)

"The populace of England," says the Quarterly Reviewers, "are more ignorant of their religious duties, than they are in any other Christian country. 'It would make any one Christian heart bleed, to think,' says Bishop Croft, 'how many thousand souls there are in this land, that have no more knowledge of God than heathens. Thousands of the mendicant condition, and thousands of the mean husbandry-men, as they grow up to be men, grow mere babes in religion,—so ignorant, as scarce to know their heavenly Father.' *At this day, the case is worse than Bishop Croft represented it.*"

But if too the statements of many of our Protestant writers be correct, then it is an unhappy fact, that the ignorance of religion does not prevail only amongst the "populace of England," but extends also to its most exalted, and best educated, classes, —pervading even those very asylums, which should be,—and were *once*,—the schools of Christian wis-

dom, and the nurseries of piety. Thus, speaking of the education at our universities, Dr. Rennel (no one could be better informed upon the subject) asserts, "Young men of rank, and talents, are dismissed from them without one single safeguard against the plausible and tremendous theories, which have turned more than one quarter of the world into an Aceldama, or field of blood. Of religion, its evidences, doctrines, and motives, they are utterly, and grossly, ignorant." (Serm.)

Similar to this is the account, which but a few weeks past, was given in the Spectator (newspaper,) respecting the order of education at Cambridge: (Why should not the statement apply equally to Oxford?) "We will bear our testimony," says the writer, "to the fact, that, in the assemblage of religious foundations at Cambridge, no religion is taught; little is felt; and that an open, or marked profession of it, is rather discountenanced than otherwise. Chapel is a bugbear, and a mockery, even to the pious; divinity lectures, a sleepy form. After a time, students and fellows, who intend to go into orders, and are on the eve of it, draw up a little, and assume more regular and serious habits. With this exception, there never was a body of men less influenced by the spirit of religion. We can safely aver, that over the morals, or the religion, of the young men who go to Cambridge, there is no other check than what may arise from the deficiency of money or credit."

(K.) Page 151.

Illiberality.

The passage which I have affixed to the title-page of this treatise,—designed by Tertullian to express the general conduct of the enemies of the Catholic church in his time,—is very accurately descriptive of the method in which, in this country, our Protestant writers still treat it, at the present day. For, be the subject almost what it may, which these men discuss, and however much they may differ upon every other question,—upon the question of our religion they are nearly all unanimous,—misrepresenting and vilifying the divine institution, without any regard to truth, to charity, or decorum. "Nihil enim interest illis, licet diversa tractantibus, dum ad unius veritatis expugnationem conspirent." Such is our Protestant literature, whenever there is question of the Catholic religion. Whence even Voltaire himself, although the most ruthless enemy of Catholicity, compares its Protestant adversaries to a set of *gladiators*, and to that class of gladiators, who fought *blindfolded*, but still fought with the most desperate fury. The comparison, and the image, are most apposite.

"Our religion," says Dr. Doyle, "is so grossly misrepresented, that it is made to appear a very moral monster. From the sole of its foot, like its Founder, to the top of its head, there is no soundness in it. It is buffeted, spit upon, and covered

with a mantle of derision. It is scourged, and drenched with vinegar and gall. The waters of affliction are made to enter into its very soul. And it is when it is thus disfigured, that the bigot and the fanatic cry out, 'Away with it, away with it.'

"When Burnet," the same eloquent writer observes, "was, in 1686, admitted to the councils of the Prince and Princess of Orange at the Hague, and undertook to assist the revolution, which was then in progress, he fulfilled his engagement, chiefly by those writings, wherein he represented Popery, and tyranny, as inseparably blended together. From that period till the present, those who are opposed to the Catholics have frequently shifted their attacks; but they have never ceased to employ such men as Burnet, for the purpose of coupling our religon with something odious. At one time, they represent us, as the advocates and supporters of arbitary power; at another, as the abettors of principles hostile to kingly government. Sometimes they introduce us as the very worst description of idolaters; and again as persons who violate our oaths, and keep no faith with heretics. For upwards of a century, they held us forth as adherents of an exiled family; and when that family ceased to exist, they transferred our allegiance from the Stuarts to the Pope. Besides these inherent faults in the system of Popery, they always hang about it shreds and patches, to excite contempt or ridicule. They bring our beads and our incense, our vestments and holy water-pots, our saints and

our pilgrimages, our prayers and our crosses; and they place these in such attitudes, as that they necessarily create laughter or disgust. By such means as these, they feed the passions of the vulgar, and keep alive the prejudices of the best-informed. They are so wealthy, and they have such an interest in our depression, that they do not hesitate to expend large sums annually, in keeping such men as Burnet employed to vilify and defame us; whilst anniversary sermons, bishops' charges, new editions of Fox's Martyrs, and a cloud of tracts and pamphlets, intercept every effort that we can make to dispel the public illusion.

"England has always been governed by a party, and that party has always kept the nation hoodwinked. Since the time of Elizabeth, the Catholics have been uniformly oppressed, and persecuted, by those who governed, and who enriched themeslves at their expense. Did they profess their loyalty; they were told that they were traitors. Did they swear to it; they were accused of perjury. Did they prove it by their works on any emergency; they were laughed at, and abused, when the danger was over."

I should like to present a few specimens of the temper which now animates a very large portion of the established clergy in our regard. The speeches and sermons of many of these men are indeed precious monuments of eloquence,—embodying every thing, that is virulent in hostility, and scurrilous in insult;—every thing, that by rancour, ridicule,

calumny, and misrepresentation, is calculated to inflame the bigotry of the violent, and to cheat the simplicity of the weak; in short, every thing, that is adapted to support, and feed, the prejudices of the public against their parent church. A mere note does not allow me to cite extracts of these effusions. However, by the way of illustration, I will just quote a few lines from a speech, which is now accidentally lying before me. They are part of a discourse of the Vicar of Harrow,—the Rev. Mr. Cunningham,—one of those itinerant apostles who, besides edifying the good people of Harrow, goes about far and near,—kind, amiable man!—to warn and instruct the public, what wicked, dangerous, blind, and benighted beings, we Papists are. "When I am speaking," says the eloquent orator, "of Popery, I know no reason why I should mince the matter. I shall rejoice at the obtaining of proselytes from such a system. I feel, that I hate, I abominate it. And if I had a thousand hands, and a thousand sledge-hammers, I would use them in endeavouring to annihilate, to sweep from the earth, that detested and abominable monster. I say, I feel this. I wish it were in my power to crush it to atoms," &c. The only circumstance which in all this scene is awful in our regard, is the fact, that, savage and ferocious as this language is, still it was cheered by a large audience, "with tremendous applause." I could cite many other samples of clerical eloquence similar to the above; or at all events, if not quite equal to it in tragic barbarity,—still, so uncharitable, and

unkind, as would much better become the priests of Moloch, than the priests of the meek and benevolent Jesus. Whilst, in like manner, what innumerable examples might I not easily produce from the speeches, and sermons, of our less intemperate adversaries, of disgusting ribaldry, of contemptible nonsense, of disgraceful misrepresentations, &c. These are, nearly always, such as to excite the disgust, and pity, of the Catholic; and to call forth, sometimes, the severe reprehensions even of the Protestants themselves.* We have no generous enemies.

* Thus, speaking of the speech delivered lately by the Rev. Mr. Fry, before a very large and distinguished assembly at Aylesbury, the eloquent writers of the Times remark, "The speech of Parson Fry is enough to make other clergymen hold down their heads with shame, and mortification, for despicable folly, alternating now and then with beastly ribaldry, indicating in every sentence a mean, malignant, and ferocious spirit, undisguised by any one outward incident, or pretension, of an educated gentleman, as it was unredeemed by the smallest spark of Christian charity or forbearance: it has never been our fortune to read any printed speech, professing to have insulted the ears of an English audience, so disgusting as that, which is given by the reporters, of Parson Fry."—And yet, again, was the orator loudly cheered!

Thus, too, describing the character of these men, the liberal Mr. Berwick, but the other day, says of them. "To them be the praise, to them be the glory, of having evoked the demon of intolerance,—of having thrown fresh ingredients into the caldron of national discontent, which was already bubbling and boiling over. Day after day, speeches of these reverend ministers are recorded,—set, laboured speeches, evidently not the product of the excitation of the moment, but the offspring

Wherefore, let me here make just this one observation :—The want of charity is always reprehensible; but it is reprehensible, above all, in the ministers of religion. For, if kindness and benevolence should reside any where, it should be in the heart, and upon the tongue, of the Christian pastor. But, not only is it the case, that the illiberality of the established clergy, in our regard, is a very gross infringement of the laws of charity,—it is, moreover, at the same time, a very odious violation of every principle both of gratitude and generosity. *It is ungrateful;* because the fact is undeniable that for all, or nearly all, the advantages and comforts which these men enjoy, they are indebted to the benevolence of the Catholic, whom they revile. Ours were but lately those riches, which now support their families, or feed and maintain their luxury :—ours, those magnificent establishments and foundations, to which they are

of patient meditation, and laborious study. With the vulgarity of taste, the poverty of diction, the blunt and brutal scurrility, displayed in these elaborate compositions, I do not quarrel. I am fully aware, that the black heart is generally attended by the weak intellect,—Providence thus, in its mercy, neutralising the suggestions of one by the impotence of the order. But, as a Christian, and a man, I cannot let the sentiments conveyed pass by, without expressing my abhorrence of them. As a man, I lament over the degrading form, that humanity has assumed in the persons of beings openly thirsting for carnage, and their fellow-creatures blood; while, as a Protestant, and a Christian, I blush and shudder at the avowal of sentiments, from which an infidel would revolt with horror," &c. (Speech at the Rotunda.)

indebted for their education, and their learning:—ours, that splendour, which adorns their temples: in short, ours, those enormous treasures, which now render the established clergy the far richest hierarchy in the Christian universe. *It is ungenerous*; because, as I have just been stating,—the strength, the security, the peace, and prosperity of this country, are, after all, every where defended, and every where supported, by the loyalty, the courage, and the devotion of the persecuted Catholic. Protestant greatness reposes upon Catholic protection. For, take away this, and what, I then ask, would, tomorrow, be the fate of England?

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A COMPARATIVE VIEW OF THE PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC RELIGIONS.

The Protestant Religion.

The following objections to the Protestant religion are alleged by the "immortal" Chillingworth. They may be found in Wood's Athenæ Oxonienses.

"First, because perpetual visible profession, which could never be wanting to the religion of Christ, nor any part of it, is apparently wanting to the Protestant religion, so far as concerns the points in contestation. 2dly, Because Luther and his followers, separating from the church of Rome, separated from all churches, pure or impure, true or untrue, then being in the world; upon which ground I

conclude, that either God's promises did fail of performance, if there were then no church in the world, which held all things necessary, and nothing repugnant to salvation; or else, that Luther and his sectaries, separating from all churches then in the world, and so from the true, if there were any true, were *damnable schismatics.* 3dly, Because, if any credit might be given to as credible records as any extant, the doctrine of the Catholiques hath been frequently confirmed, and the opposite doctrine of the Protestants confounded, with supernatural and divine miracles. 4thly, Because many points of Protestant doctrine are the damned opinions of heretics, condemned by the primitive church. 5thly, Because the prophecies of the Old Testament, touching the conversion of kings and nations to the true religion of Christ, have been accomplished in and by the Catholique Roman religion, and the professors of it. 6thly, Because the doctrine of the church of Rome is conformable, and the doctrine of the Protestants contrary, to the doctrine of the fathers of the primitive church, even by the confession of the Protestants themselves; I mean those fathers who lived within the compass of 600 years, to whom Protestants themselves do very frequently and confidently appeal. 7thly, Because the first pretended reformers had neither extraordinary commission from God, nor ordinary mission from the church, to preach Protestant doctrine. 8thly, Because Luther, to preach against the Mass (which contains the most material points now in controversy,) was per-

suaded by reasons, suggested to him by the devil himself disputing with him.* So himself professeth in his book *de Missâ Privatâ*, that all men might take heed of following him, who professeth himself to follow the devil. 9thly, Because the Protestant cause is

* Incredulity may smile, or impiety deride the circumstance, but it is a very awful, and a very singular, fact,—a fact as perplexing to the Protestant, as it is disgraceful to the Protestant cause,—a fact, too, which is not even so much as called in question,—that the two, leading and most important tenets of the Reformation were, both of them, acknowledgedly derived from the prince of darkness. I allude to the tenets relating to the Eucharist. Thus, we have, in the first place, the testimony of Luther, very candidly admitting, and even triumphantly boasting, that it was the above enlightened monitor, who,—instructing him, that transubstantiation is an error,—engaged him to substitute the system of consubstantiation in its room. The account of the strange, but frightful conference, between the two learned doctors, may be found in all the early editions of the great Reformer's works,—both in those which were published by himself, and in those which were, soon after, printed by his disciples.

In like manner, we have, next, the testimony of the apostle Zuinglius,—detailed, and formal, as the narrative of Luther,—that it was from the same learned teacher that he too received the useful information, that the Eucharist is neither more nor less than an empty *figure;* and that the doctrine of the real presence is a completely human invention. The dialogue between the two enlightened theologians is related at some length in Zuinglius's book, *De Subsidio Eucharistiæ*. It resembles the preceding one with the arch-apostle. There is only this important difference between them, that Zuinglius very seriously informs us, that "he had quite forgotten the very interesting circumstance, whether his instructor was *black* or *white!*"

now, and hath been from the beginning, maintained with gross falsifications and calumnies, whereof their prime controversy writers are notoriously and in high degree guilty. 10thly, Because, by denying all human authority, either by Pope, or councils, or church, to determine controversies of faith, they have abolished all possible means of suppressing heresy, or of restoring unity to the church." Such are the reasons which induced Chillingworth to abandon the Protestant, and to embrace the Catholic religion. It is true, indeed, that, tempted by the prospects of promotion, and urged by the restlessness of his temper, he, ere long, renounced his newly-adopted religion, and became a member of the established church; although, as Gibbon remarks, he had positively declared, but a few weeks before he took the step, that he could not subscribe the thirty-nine articles, "without subscribing to his own damnation." However, he did not long remain a *believing* member of this church: for, finding,—as all reasoning Protestants do find,—that with the principles of the Reformation, *consistently applied*, it is impossible for men to stand still,—and that between Catholicity and incredulity, there is no firm ground to stand upon,—finding this, he very early threw himself into the abysses of Socinianism. Gibbon indeed asserts, that, "according to the popular opinion of the man, his anxious inquiries subsided at length in philosophic indifference." However, be this as it may,—the strange versatility of his character lessons none of the force of his above-cited arguments.

The Catholic Church.

The following recommendations of the Catholic church are extracted from the works of the celebrated Jeremy Taylor.

"There are many considerations which may retain persons of much reason, and more piety, in its communion. They know it to have been the religion of their forefathers, which had possession of men's understandings before Protestantism had a name." He then enumerates the succeeding arguments in its favour: "First, its *doctrines*, having had a long continuance and possession of the church; which, therefore, cannot easily be supposed in the present possessors to be a design, since they have received them from so many ages. Its *long prescription*, which is such a prejudice, as cannot with many arguments be retrenched; as relying upon these grounds—that truth is more ancient than falsehood—that God would not, for so many ages, forsake his church, and leave her in error. Then comes the splendor and beauty of that church; its pompous service; the stateliness and solemnity of its hyerarchy; its name, 'Catholic;' the antiquity of its doctrines; the continual succession of its bishops, and their immediate derivation from the apostles; its title to succeed St. Peter. Add to this the multitude and variety of people which are of its persuasion; the consent of elder ages; the great consent of one part with another, contrasted with

the great differences which are commenced among their adversaries. To this again add, its happiness in being the instrument in converting diverse nations; the advantage of monarchical (the Papal) government, the benefit of which its members daily enjoy; the piety and austerity of its religious orders; the single life of its priests and bishops; the severity of its fasts; the great reputation of its bishops for faith and sanctity; the known holiness of some of its religious founders of orders; its miracles; the accidents and casualties, which have happened to its adversaries; the oblique acts, and indirect proceedings of some of these who have departed from it; and above all, the name of 'heretick' and 'schismatick,' which the Catholic church has fastened on them. Protestants commit themselves by the conduct of the new reformers; at first few, and of the lowest rank of the clergy, being under ecclesiastical censures, assisted against their spiritual superiors by some secular powers, when both they and these were subject to that ecclesiastical hyerarchy which they opposed."

Extract from Sir Edwyn Sandys's Relation of the Western Religions:—

"Of all probable proofs, the Catholic church testimony is the most probable. What madness, then, it is for any man to tire out his soul, and to waste away his spirits, in tracing out all the thorny paths of the controversies of these days, wherein to err is no less easy than dangerous! Why not

rather betake himself to the right path of truth, whereunto God and nature, reason and experience, do all give witness? That is, why not associate himself to that church, whereunto the custody of this heavenly and supernatural truth hath been from heaven itself committed? Why not weigh discreetly, which is the true church; and having once found it, why not receive faithfully and obediently what it delivers?" The above words, it is true, are spoken in the person of the Catholic; but Sir Edwyn returns no answer to them. He even proceeds to enumerate the following recommendations of the Catholic church:—

"The Catholic church was founded by the apostles, with promise, that the gates of hell should not prevail against it. It has continued on now, till the end of 1600 years, with honourable and certain line, of near two hundred and forty popes, successors of St. Peter,—both tyrants, traitors, pagans, and hereticks, in vain wresting, raging, and undermining it. All the general councils that ever were in the world, have approved and honoured it. God hath miraculously blessed it from above: so many learned doctors have enriched it with their writings; armies of saints have embellished it with ther holiness; martyrs, with their blood; virgins, with their purity. Even at this day, amid the difficulties of unjust rebellions, and the unnatural revolts of her nearest children, she yet stretcheth out her arms to the utmost corners of the world; newly embracing whole nations into her bosom. In all opposite

churches, there are found inward dissentions, and contrariety; change of opinions; uncertainty of revolutions; with robbing of churches; rebelling against governors; and confusion of order. In the Catholic church there is undivided unity; resolutions unalterable; the most heavenly order, reaching from the height of all power to the lowest of all subjection; all with admirable harmony, and undefective correspondence, bending the same way to the effecting of the same purpose," &c.

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THE AUTHORS, AND FOUNDERS, OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

Its chief Apostle, Cranmer.

The enlightened and candid writers of the Edinburgh Review, speaking, in a late number, of the great founders of the Church of England, describe them thus :—"They were—a king, whose character may be best described, by saying, that he was despotism itself personified; unprincipled ministers; a rapacious aristocracy; a servile parliament. Such were the instruments by which England was delivered from the yoke of Rome. The work, which had been begun by Henry, the murderer of his wives, was continued by Somerset, the murderer of his brother; and completed by Elizabeth, the murderer of her guest. Sprung from brutal passion; nurtured by selfish policy,—the Reformation in

England displayed little of what had, in other countries, distinguished it,—unflinching and unsparing devotion, boldness of speech, and singleness of eye. Of those who had any important share in bringing the alteration about, the excellent Ridley was perhaps the only person who did not consider it as a mere political job. Even Ridley did not play a very prominent part. Among the statesmen and prelates, who principally gave the tone to the religious changes, there is one, and only one, whose conduct partiality itself can attribute to any other than interested motives. We need not say that we speak of Cranmer.

"If we consider Cranmer merely as a statesman, he will not appear a much worse man than Wolsey, Gardener, Cromwell, or Somerset; but, when an attempt is made to set him up as a saint, it is scarcely possible for any man of sense, who knowst he history of the times well, to preserve his gravity. The shameful origin of his history, common enough in the scandalous chronicles of courts, seems strangely out of place in a hagiology. Cranmer rose into favour by serving Henry in the disgraceful affair of his first divorce. He promoted the marriage of Anne Boleyn with the king. On a frivolous pretence, he pronounced it null and void. On a pretence, if possible still more frivolous, he dissolved the ties which bound the shameless tyrant to Anne of Cleves. He attached himself to Cromwell, while the fortunes of Cromwell flourished; he voted for cutting off his head without a trial, when

the tide of royal favour turned. He conformed backwards and forwards, as the king changed his mind. While Henry lived, he assisted in condemning to the flames those who denied the doctrine of transubstantiation; when Henry died, he found out that the doctrine was false. He was, however, not at a loss for people to burn. The authority of his station, and of his grey hairs, was employed to overcome the disgust, with which an intelligent and virtuous child regarded persecution.

"Intolerance is always bad; but the sanguinary intolerance of a man who thus wavered in his creed, excites a loathing to which it is difficult to give vent, without calling foul names. Equally false to political and to religious obligations, he was first the tool of Somerset, and then the tool of Northumberland. When the former wished to put his own brother to death, without even the form of a trial, he found a ready instrument in Cranmer. In spite of the canon law, which forbade a churchman to take any part in matters of blood, the archbishop signed the warrant for the atrocious sentence. When Somerset had been, in his turn, destroyed, his destroyer received the support of Cranmer in his attempt to change the course of the succession.

"The apology made for him by his admirers, only renders his conduct more contemptible. He complied; it is said, against his better judgment, because he could not resist the entreaties of Edward! A holy prelate of sixty, one would think, might be better employed by the bedside of a dying child,

than in committing crimes at the request of his disciple. If he had shown half as much firmness when Edward requested him not to commit murder, he might have saved the country from one of the greatest misfortunes that it ever underwent. He became, from whatever motive, the accomplice of the worthless Dudley. The virtuous scruples of another young and amiable mind were to be overcome. As Edward had been forced into persecution, Jane was to be seduced into usurpation. No transaction in our annals is more unjustifiable than this. To the part which Cranmer, and unfortunately some better men than Cranmer, took in this most reprehensible scheme, much of the severity with which Protestants were afterwards treated, must, in fairness, be ascribed.

"The plot failed, popery triumphed, and Cranmer recanted. Most people look upon his recantation as a single blemish on an honorable life,—the frailty of an unguarded moment. But, in fact, it was in strict accordance with the system on which he had constantly acted. It was a part of a regular habit. It was not the first recantation that he had made; and in all probability, if it had answered his purpose, it would not have been the last. We do not blame him for not choosing to be burnt alive. It is no very severe reproach to any person, that he does not possess heroic fortitude. But, surely, a man who liked the fire so little, should have had some sympathy for others. A persecutor who inflicts nothing which he is not ready to endure, deserves

some respect; but, when a man who loves his doctrines more than the lives of his neighbours, loves his own little finger better than his doctrines, a very simple argument, *a fortiori*, will enable us to estimate the amount of his benevolence.

"But his martyrdom, it is said, redeemed every thing. It is extraordinary, that so much ignorance should exist on this subject. The fact is, that if a martyr be a man who chooses to die rather than renounce his opinions, Cranmer was no more a martyr than Dr. Dodd. He died, solely because he could not help it. He never retracted his recantation, till he found he had made it in vain. If Mary had suffered him to live, we suspect that he would have heard Mass, and received absolution, like a good Catholic, till the accession of Elizabeth; and that he would then have purchased, by another apostacy, the power of burning men better and braver than himself.

"We do not mean to represent him, however, as a monster of wickedness. He was not wantonly cruel or treacherous. He was merely a supple, timid, interested courtier, in times of frequent and violent change.

"Somerset, with as little principle as his coadjutor had a firmer and more commanding mind. Of Henry, an orthodox Catholic, excepting that he chose to be his own pope,—and of Elizabeth, who certainly had no objection to the theology of Rome, we need say nothing. But, these four persons were the great authors of the English Reformation. Three

of them had a direct interest in the extension of the royal prerogative: the fourth was the ready tool of any who could frighten him. It is not difficult to see from what motives, and on what plan, such persons would be inclined to remodel the church. The scheme was merely to rob the Babylonian enchantress of her ornaments, in order to transfer the full cup of her sorceries to other hands,—spilling as little as possible by the way. The principal founders of the church of England were mere politicians." For a continuation of the subject, see the review of Mr. Hallam's Constitutional History.

THE END.

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